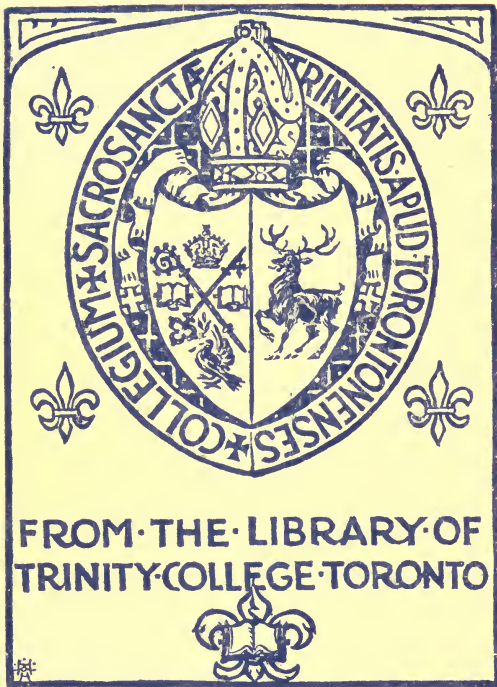


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A COMMENTARY

*Expository and Devotional*

ON THE

ORDER OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE  
LORD'S SUPPER

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# A COMMENTARY

*EXPOSITORY AND DEVOTIONAL*

ON THE ORDER OF THE

## Administration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion

ACCORDING TO THE USE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

BY EDWARD MEYRICK GOULBURN, D.D.

DEAN OF NORWICH

RIVINGTONS

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TO

R. AUBREY CARTWRIGHT, ESQ.

OF EDGCOTT,

IN THE COUNTY OF NORTHAMPTON,

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WITH TRUE BROTHERLY AFFECTION.



21, SUSSEX GARDENS, HYDE PARK, W.  
*May 30th, 1863.*

MY DEAR AUBREY,

I hope and believe that you will in the main agree with the sentiments expressed in this little work.

The chief purport of it is edification; but in writing on the Office of the Holy Communion, one necessarily comes across questions of a controversial character.

The chief of these is the doctrine of the Sacrament. On this difficult subject I have endeavoured to set forth the teaching of our own Church, as expressed in her formularies, and represented by her best Divines, repudiating on the one hand Transubstantiation, and all erroneous views holding of that dogma, and on the other Zwinglianism and all views which go to reduce the Holy Sacrament to a mere symbol, and to empty it of its character as the highest means of Grace. I have tried to maintain that our Lord's Body and Blood are verily and indeed (and not merely

in a figure) taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper, though after a heavenly and spiritual manner, which (because it is heavenly and spiritual) it is presumptuous to attempt to comprehend or define.

And if in treating of so delicate a subject I have made (on either side) a statement at all unsafe, I desire to retract such statement, and to submit to the authority of the Formularies of our Church, to all which I give my unqualified assent and consent.

It will be seen from several passages of this book that I cannot sympathize with those (many of them wise and excellent men) who are anxious to recast parts of our Church Service. My own experience leads me to a conclusion the very reverse of theirs. In early life I was struck with several superficial objections to parts of the Book of Common Prayer, which I suppose have occurred to nearly every one on first giving his mind to the subject. But more thought, more careful study of Holy Scripture, and a slight acquaintance (I wish it had been deeper) with the history and the sources of the English Prayer Book, have in most cases turned the objection into a positive approval, in all have supplied an explanation fully and entirely satisfactory. It would be too much to say that, if the Prayer Book were now to be composed *de novo*,

certain portions of it might not with advantage be otherwise stated; but, as the Bishop of Oxford remarked, in his speech in Parliament on a kindred subject, it is a totally different question whether it would be wise, when many doctrinal associations have grown up round each sentence excepted against, to reconstruct it. Now that the controversy of ages has made certain passages a battle-field, it would be almost implied in altering those passages (if you will, in improving them), that the Church had receded from a point of doctrine. Thus if the "I absolve thee" of the Visitation Service were to be exchanged for a more primitive form of Absolution (which I suppose none of us would be sorry to see in the abstract), the change would be taken as implying an abandonment altogether of the doctrine of Ministerial Absolution, and this (true and Scriptural) doctrine would receive in many minds a blow which it would never recover. In retaining the difficult passages, *we are protesting not so much for them as for the doctrines intrenched behind them, which our opponents desire to supplant.* If we could feel that only the words were the stumbling-block, and not the doctrine of which the words are considered the representative, we would not be so scrupulous as to altering words.

One of my chief aims in this Commentary has been to point out to my readers the great beauty and appropriateness of the Office on which I have undertaken to comment, and the large amount of thought, erudition, and piety which underlies it. Almost all the world praise the Prayer Book (even Dissenters are found to do so very copiously), and with about as much intelligence as they show in praising Shakspeare and Milton. If the majority would be honest about Shakspeare and Milton, they would confess that some of the ephemeral poetry of the day is far more attractive, and possesses what seems to them more sparkling poetical beauty; and if the majority would be honest about the Prayer Book, they would admit that they much prefer to its terse and chastened fervour some rambling and diffuse piece of devotion, thrown off on the spur of the moment, without method of arrangement, and of no merit as a composition. I have aimed in these pages at insinuating the thought that the Prayer Book will repay study, and deep study, and that none can really appreciate it (whatever professions they may make to that effect), without at all events a patient and careful consideration of its structure and contents.

I am afraid that both the sentiments and style of this little book are sadly old-fashioned, and will find

little favour with those who seek always "to hear, or to tell some new thing."

My apology must be, that the quiet edification of the heart has been the great object consulted, and that novel and startling assertions do not make so much for edification as commonplace homely truths earnestly urged.

I remain, my dear Aubrey,

Yours ever affectionately,

E. MEYRICK GOULBURN.

R. AUBREY CARTWRIGHT, Esq.,  
&c. &c. &c.

## NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

### UPON A CRITICISM IN "THE ECCLESIASTIC."

A SEVERE criticism of this little work, which appeared in "The Ecclesiastic" for October 1863, demands a short notice. Whether there be "a great deal of irreverence in my idea" of the Holy Eucharist, I willingly leave to the judgment of those who may care to read this book; but I am also charged with misrepresentation of certain matters of fact through ignorance. I have stated (page 7) that "the Paschal Lamb was *partaken of* by the company at supper," and also (page 9) that "the supper was terminated by singing certain Psalms." (But I have nowhere intimated that the Lamb was *slain* in the house, being well aware that the slaying went on in the Temple Court.) Hereupon my reviewer remarks:—

"Dr. G. assumes, apparently without question, that our Lord ate the Sacrifice of the Passover at the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, and that the hymn that He and His disciples sung after supper was the Great Hallel. The Great Hallel was always sung in the Court of the Temple after the Sacrifice was completed."



And a few lines above :—

“The lamb was sacrificed in the Court of the Temple, its blood poured out at the foot of the altar” (perfectly true), “and each one of the company—a company consisted of thirty persons—ate a piece at least of the size of an olive” (as if this eating, no less than the slaying, went on in the Court of the Temple).

An appeal is made to Lightfoot, as “a good Protestant authority,” to show that I am wrong. Lightfoot, however, as well as every other commentator I have consulted, shows, in the most emphatic way, that I am right. This is the summary of that chapter of Lightfoot’s *Treatise on the Temple Service*, which is headed “*Their manner of eating the Passover.*” “Now to take up the rubric of this sacramental supper in a short sum, they sat them down in a leaning posture, began with a cup of wine, over which they hallowed the day ; washed their hands : the table is furnished,—they first eat some salad ; have a second cup of wine filled, over which is the rehearsal of the *Haggadah* and of *Psalms* cxiii., cxiv. ; and then the wine drunk off. They wash their hands again ; unleavened bread is broken and blessed, and some of it eaten with bitter herbs dipped in the thick sauce ; then eat they the flesh of the peace-offerings ; AND THEN THE FLESH OF THE LAMB ; after which they wash ; have a third cup of wine filled, or the *Cup of Blessing* ; over which they first say grace after meat ; and then give thanks for the wine, and so

drink it off. And, lastly, they have a fourth cup of wine filled, over which THEY SAY THE HALLEL OUT, and a prayer or two after it; and so they have done."—(Lightfoot's *Temple Service*, chap. xii.)

Again in "the Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations upon St. Mark," commenting upon that verse (chap. xiv. 26),—"And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives,"—Lightfoot says:—

"That Hymn is called by the Rabbins the 'Hallel,' and was from the beginning of Psalm cxiii. to the end of Psalm cxviii., which they cut in two parts; and a part of it they repeated in the very middle of the Banquet, and they reserved a part to the end. . . . THE HYMN, WHICH CHRIST NOW SANG WITH HIS DISCIPLES AFTER MEAT, WAS THE LATTER PART.

It is true, no doubt, as the reviewer intimates, that the Hallel was also said at the *slaying* of the Paschal Lamb, which was done in the Court of the Temple. "Every company said over the Hallel three times; for their Paschals were many, and they were bound to the saying over the Hallel at the slaying of them."—(Maimonides, quoted by Lightfoot, *Temple Service*, chap. xii. § 5.)

As regards the *Great Hallel* (which was different from the common or Egyptian one), there appears to have been a question among Jewish Doctors of what Psalms it consisted. We are told, however, in chap. xiii.

of the *Temple Service*,—"They have a tradition that if they were minded, they might drink off a fifth cup of wine" (after the eating of the Passover in the house), "upon this condition,—that they should say the *Great Hallel* over it." I do not find in Lightfoot that this *Great Hallel* was necessarily said at the *slaying*, though it was occasionally said at the *eating* of the Passover.—Then again, as to the place where the lamb was eaten. The chief dish said by Lightfoot to have been placed on the table at the supper was—

"The body of the Paschal Lamb roasted whole, and so brought up, the legs and inwards, as heart and liver, &c., held by some to have been put and roasted *within* him, but, by others, to have been fastened by some means upon his body, and so roasted on the outside of him."—(*Temple Service*, chap. xiii.)

The reviewer has also fallen foul of me for calling Transubstantiation "a heresy." In popular parlance it surely may be called so. In Dr. Hook's *Church Dictionary* heresy is defined as "an arbitrary adoption, in matters of faith, of opinions at variance with the doctrines delivered by CHRIST and the Apostles, and received by the Catholic Church." It would not be difficult to show that Transubstantiation falls under this category; though, according to the narrower definition given by the Act of Parliament of the 1st Eliz. ("Only such" matter or cause shall be adjudged to be heresy, "as heretofore have been adjudged to be heresy

by the authority of the canonical Scriptures, or *by some of the first four general councils*, or by any other general council wherein the same was declared heresy by the express and plain words of the said canonical Scriptures, or such as hereafter shall be judged or determined to be heresy by the high court of parliament, with the assent of the clergy in their convocation"), Transubstantiation would be excluded, as I readily admit, from the number of heresies. My critic may make what he likes of this admission; but I do not think he will gain much from it. That Transubstantiation is a most serious and perilous error both he and I allow; for we have both avowed our belief that "it is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions."—(Art. 28.) Is it not plain that with those who are uneducated and unable to understand the philosophical explanation of the dogma, the belief of it must soon lapse into a form of idolatry? Being unwilling, however, to characterise any tenet of professing Christians with unnecessary harshness, I willingly embrace the opportunity, which is afforded by a Second Edition, of substituting another word for that which has given offence.

E. M. G.

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# INTRODUCTORY

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## CHAPTER I

### *THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF THE HOLY COMMUNION*

“Thy memorial, O Lord, endureth throughout all generations.”—PSA. cxxxv. 13

**B**EFORE entering on the consideration of the English Office of the Holy Communion, it will be proper, by way of Preface, to give a slight sketch of the history and origin of the Ordinance.

Those who desire to understand Christianity thoroughly, whether in its doctrines or in its institutions, should always bear in mind that Judaism was the cradle of it. In fact, Christianity was not so much a new religion as the extraordinary development of a religion which had long existed. Judaism indeed was a narrow dull-coloured chrysalis; and Christianity in comparison of it is like the painted butterfly, free and ethereal, which disports itself in sunlight and air; still, as the butterfly was once confined in the chrysalis, so the germ of Christianity lay hid in Judaism. “The salvation” (said our Lord to the woman of Samaria) “is of the Jews.” The Saviour Himself was a Jew, pointed at by the silent (yet eloquent) finger of a thousand oracles, given by God’s holy prophets, “which had been since the world began.” His Apostles, the great instruments of propagating His religion, were all Jews,

reared in Jewish habits of thought, surrounded by Jewish associations, devout men according to the Law. Many of the *doctrines* which they proclaimed on the housetop (such as the Resurrection, the Atonement, and to a certain extent the Trinity) had been whispered in the ear under the Law, spoken of under the voice mysteriously as subjects reserved for the initiated, and on which fuller revelations were in store for God's people. The highest and most comprehensive *precept* which they had to give,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,”—had been given ages before by the great Jewish Legislator. The petitions of the model *prayer*, which they were to put into the mouth of disciples, did not (for the most part) originate with their Divine Master; they had been floating about previously in the devotional literature of the Jews; and Christ's part in them was chiefly that of compilation and arrangement. Baptism, the initiatory *rite* of Christianity, was perfectly familiar to the Jews of the time of Christ. It had been practised for long centuries at the admission of Proselytes: and the authority for it was supposed to be derived<sup>1</sup> from the direction for a ceremonial washing, which Moses gave the people before they were formally admitted into covenant with God at Mount Sinai. And what shall we say of the Lord's Supper? That it grew entirely out of the Jewish Paschal Festival, which it was destined to supersede; that the elements of wine and unleavened bread had been used for long centuries in the Paschal feast, and a blessing or consecration pro-

<sup>1</sup> “They” (the Jewish writers) “take notice that Moses (Num. xv. 15) orders thus, *One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger (or proselyte) that sojourneth with you.* Now they reckon that the Israelites themselves were at their entering into Covenant with God at the time of their receiving the Law in Mount Sinai, all of them washed or baptized. So they understand those words (Exod. xix. 10), *And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day.*”—Wall's History of Infant Baptism. Introduction, § 2.



nounced over them, long before our LORD by *His* Blessing converted them into a Sacrament of His Religion. Let us, as it were, visit the Lord's Supper in this its cradle, by recounting some particulars of the Paschal Festival, as they are given by Jewish writers.

All Jewish feasts were precluded with a ceremonial washing, which, in the case of the Passover, was repeated in the course of it. The washing of the disciples' feet, when the supper was served,<sup>2</sup> was a usual ceremony, the only novel circumstance being that on this occasion the Master of the Feast Himself officiated in this humiliating way. After the first washing, the Master, taking a cup of wine in His hand, said, "Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, the King of the universe, who hast created the fruit of the vine." The cup was then passed from hand to hand, and each guest tasted it. Our Lord's compliance with this early part of the ceremony is mentioned by St. Luke alone, who makes it extremely clear that this was *not* the Sacramental Cup, by referring shortly afterwards to that as "the Cup *after* Supper," whereas this Cup, and the participation of it, opened the proceedings. A table was then brought in, spread with bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and a thick sauce<sup>3</sup> made to resemble clay, and intended to remind the pious Israelite of his

<sup>2</sup> Our Authorized Version tells us that, "supper being *ended*," the washing of the disciples' feet took place (John xiii. 2). This is a mistranslation. If the usual reading *δείπνου γενομένου* be retained, the sense will be, "supper being served," or, "when supper had begun" (compare such expressions as *ἡμέρας γενομένης*, "when it was day," "when day had begun," *πρωίας γενομένης*, "when the morning was come"). Tischendorf accepts the reading *γινόμενου*, which would mean "when supper was beginning," "when they were on the point of sitting down." But, independently of particular expressions, it is abundantly clear from the Sacred Narrative that supper could not have been "*ended*" when the washing took place; for it is represented as in progress afterwards (ver. 26), where we read, "When He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon."

<sup>3</sup> It was called *Charoseth*, and made of raisins, figs, dates, &c., pressed or stamped together.

forefathers having made bricks in Egypt. Crowning all these viands, was the roasted body of the Passover Lamb. Then the Master blessed God, who created the fruit of the earth; and dipping some of the herbs in the sauce, ate them, and was followed in this action by the whole company. (We are at once reminded that the dipping of a sop and the handing it to Judas was the way in which our Blessed Lord indicated the traitor to his colleagues.) Then followed a formal declaration of the grounds of the Paschal Institution, which was done in this manner:—A child, or some one assuming the character of a stranger, asked, “What meaneth this service?” The answer was, “How different is this night from all other nights! for all other nights we wash but once, in this twice; in all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread, in this unleavened only; in other nights, we eat any sort of herbs, in this night, bitter herbs; in all other nights we eat and drink either sitting or lying, but in this we lie (or recline) only.” (It will be remembered that the disciple, whom Jesus loved, was *lying* on His bosom at supper.) Then followed a recital to this effect,—that the Passover was instituted to commemorate the Lord’s passing over the houses of their fathers,—that the bitter herbs were eaten, to remind them how the Egyptians had made the lives of those fathers bitter; and, thirdly, that the unleavened bread was to remind them how they had been cast out of Egypt in haste, before their dough had time to be leavened. This formal recital, declaration, or showing forth of the grounds of the Paschal Institution, corresponds to, and is represented by, that passage of our Communion Office which begins, “And to the end that we should always remember the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by His precious bloodshedding He hath obtained to us; He hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of His love, and for a continual remembrance of His death, to our great and endless comfort.” And to it no doubt

St. Paul refers, when he says of the Christian Ordinance: "As often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do *show forth* (declare, recite the intention and significance of) the Lord's Death, till He come." The second cup of wine was then blessed and partaken of; after which followed the breaking and distribution (after a thanksgiving similar to that said over the wine) of one of the unleavened cakes, two of which were always provided. Then the company partook of the lamb, engaging in conversation the while; and it was during this period probably that the indication of Judas, as traitor, by giving him a piece of bread sopped or dipped in the clay-like sauce, and his subsequent exit took place. Though he joined in the *Paschal* supper, there are good grounds for doubt<sup>4</sup> whether he was present at the institution of the Eucharist. There was no reason why he should witness what, as his wicked design was now matured by Satan's entering into him, he would never have to hand down or administer. The conversation, which we may suppose had dropped into an ominous silence after his sullen withdrawal, was beginning to revive, when the great Master of the Feast with peculiar solemnity took the second unleavened cake, and, breaking it with both His hands according to the usual form, substituted for the ordinary Judaical blessing certain words of His own, which gracious words were for eleven centuries of the Church's existence (as indeed they are now) the comfort of faithful hearts and simple minds, but since

<sup>4</sup> It is a moot point whether Judas partook of the Holy Communion. The generality of modern critics (Bishop Ellicott among the number) think his exit from the supper-room to have taken place before the institution of the Eucharist, the latter half of which at all events is expressly said to have occurred *μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνῆσαι* "*after supper*," Luke xxii. 20. Our Prayer Book represents the view of the earlier commentators, who regard Judas as the first instance of an impenitent and unworthy communicant: "Lest after the taking of this Holy Sacrament the devil enter into you, *as he entered into Judas.*" Bishop Christopher Wordsworth and Dean Alford subscribe to this view. The precise chronological arrangement of the events of the Last Supper is surrounded with great difficulties.

that time have been the rallying-point of controversy for curious and carnally-minded disputants: "Take, eat: this is My Body, which is given for you: Do this in remembrance of Me."

Soon after, the third cup was mingled, which was usually called "the cup of blessing." Over this cup it was usual to give thanks for the Covenant of Circumcision, and for the Law of Moses. But "the cup of blessing" was now to commemorate a better Covenant, and a new Law; and accordingly our LORD, here again abandoning the customary formula, pronounced, and in pronouncing prescribed to His Church, these new words of Consecration: "Drink ye all of this; for this is My Blood of the New Covenant" (observe, the cup had been hitherto the cup of the *Old* Covenant, thanksgiving for the blessings of the Old Covenant having been made over it), "which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins."

A fourth cup followed, and sometimes a fifth; though there are no traces of our LORD'S having observed these parts of the ceremonial, which do not seem to have been by the Jews themselves considered essential. The supper was terminated by singing certain Psalms ("When they had sung an hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives"); and if these Psalms, with which the festival closed, were, as they are commonly represented to have been, the 116th, 117th, and 118th, most striking under the circumstances must have been the use of those words which occur towards the end of the last of these: "God is the Lord, who hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." The Victim was there, Who was to be sacrificed in the course of the next morning, and the cords were preparing with which to bind Him; for Judas was just hatching his infernal plot, and, after the interlude of the Agony and the disciples' slumber, it was to result in the action described in those words: "Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and *bound Him.*"

We trust that no one, to whose mind this historical origin of the Lord's Supper is unfamiliar, will be disposed to think that we derogate from the dignity of the Ordinance when we thus trace up both parts of it to a Jewish rite. That Jewish rite was itself in its main features ordained by the Almighty; and moreover, although it is, as we have shown, a well-established fact that the elements of the Lord's Supper were employed at Jewish festivals, and received a kind of consecration, they never had the virtue, and therefore never had the dignity of a Sacrament, till Christ's institution of them to that end. To adduce a case somewhat parallel, which may illustrate the matter in hand. It is clear that the rainbow must have existed, before God invested it with a religious significance, and made it the sign of His Covenant. The phenomenon is produced, as is well known, by the refraction of the rays of light, when striking upon the pendent drops of the shower; and as there had been copious rain during the period of the flood (and doubtless long before that period,—for “the mist that went up from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground,” was the exclusive method of irrigation in Paradise only); and as the agency of light had been in operation from the Creation, it necessarily follows that the phenomenon, which is the combined result of the two, must have been witnessed by human eyes before God called Noah's attention to it. But never before God said, “I do set” (or *appoint*—the Hebrew word is quite capable of this translation, without any straining of its meaning) “my bow in the clouds,” was the rainbow the sign of a Divine Covenant; never before did it possess that religious meaning, which ever since it has had for the world of men. So with the Eucharistic elements. They had been used before in Jewish festivals, and received (as all food was wont to be received by the Jews) with a grace and words of thanksgiving. But never before had they a peculiar meaning in connexion with the great Covenant of Redemption. Never before did they preach to the mind of man

through the eye the great doctrine of the Atonement ; still less did the participation of them ever before convey to the soul of the faithful the Body and Blood of the Crucified Redeemer.

And now to what practical account shall we turn these reflections on the historical origin of the Holy Communion ?

We learn a lesson, first, respecting the gradual growth and expansion of Religious Truth among men : and, secondly, respecting the possible co-existence of Unity with the utmost difference of Religious Forms.

1. Christianity was not strictly an original Religion, either in its doctrines, precepts, or institutions. It grew out of a preceding dispensation ; its holiest rite is literally a fragment, torn off from an old Jewish festival, and placed by the Saviour in what I may call a sacramental shrine. And in like manner this preceding dispensation itself had gone on growing. The original promise respecting the Seed of the Woman formed the whole religion of Adam and Eve. This religion received great accession from succeeding promises to Abraham and his descendants ; it made a great shoot at the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, another important development when the throne of David was established. It was enlarged, spiritualized, every way improved,—yet without any departure from the old platform,—by the ministry of the Prophets ; until at length the Coming One came forth from the bosom of this Religion, as it was waxing old and ready to vanish away, and swept aside the old rudiments, and pointed out to men the true teaching which was underlying them. Yet He came not (if we may trust His own description of the object of His Mission) “to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them.”

Now, as there were developments of Judaism, as time went on, so doubtless there have been, and still will be, developments of Christianity. Wherever there is life, there is growth ; and wherever the religion of Christ has a real living hold upon the minds of men,

those minds, through many errors, contradictions, eccentricities, heresies, will struggle on to a forward movement. It is a great mistake, whatever their temporary irregularities may be, to try to stifle these movements either by authority, civil or ecclesiastical, or, which is the same thing (only in a much worse form), by a popular hue and cry. You *cannot* stifle them without stifling the life out of the Church. Controversies and theological movements are the conditions of life; and the essential condition of a controversy is, that one of the combatants must be in the wrong; and the essential condition of a theological movement is, that many persons who throw their weight into the movement will be guilty of foolish and unscriptural, and even fanatical extravagances. It is of no use to make a bonfire of them at the stake, or, which is the modern fashion of persecution, to hang them up on the gibbet of public opinion. As well might you say of a very wild mischievous boy, who was once a quiet and docile child, "I shall set myself to stop that boy's growing, make him grow downwards, and put him back two or three years in life." You cannot make him stop growing without killing him. Take comfort, then, in the distracting movements of the Church of Christ, and remember that there is One presiding over those movements, who knows how to disentangle Truth from error, to sweep away the rubbish of human fancies, and establish the mind of man in what is sound and good. Never was better counsel given respecting novel and unfamiliar views of Religious Truth, than that of Gamaliel to the Sanhedrim: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." Yea; God, by means of contradictions and heresies, will clear His Truth to the minds of men, will define it more sharply, will make it better understood and appreciated: for until a truth is assaulted, and tested by assault, it can never be fully apprehended.

But it will be said, "Since you admit that Religious Truth expands in the minds of men, as Time goes on, so as to present itself in new aspects, and to develop itself in new forms,—since Christianity itself is capable of further illustration than it has yet received, by increased learning, better knowledge of the language of the New Testament, new evidences, unearthed by Science, new discoveries (by means of the event) of the meaning of Prophecy, and so forth; is there no criterion, by which we may distinguish between true and false views? Are we bound to take up with any extravagance or fanaticism, which the movement of the religious mind of our time may throw up to the surface?" Not so. There is in the Volume of Holy Scripture a perfect Canon of Religious Truth. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Apply the Canon fairly and with prayer, discarding all prepossessions, and giving their due weight to counterbalancing truths, and whatever may be the fancies of others, your own mind is perfectly safe. Where Scripture speaks unequivocally and copiously (as on the necessity of Repentance and Faith, the duty of Prayer, the virtue of Christ's Atonement) the point is of first-rate magnitude and primary importance. Where Scripture makes statements on both sides, as on the question pending between Calvinists and Arminians, both statements, with all their logical consequences, must be accepted, and the exact theoretical adjustment of them deferred to the time, when we shall see face to face, and know as we are known. Where the Scriptural argument on one side is far stronger than on the other, though on the other too something may be said, (as in the case of Episcopacy and Infant Baptism,) we must side with the stronger argument, yet with charity to those who maintain the weaker. And where Scripture says nothing on a theological topic we are at liberty to hold any pious opinion, as a private fancy, so as it does not contradict, either explicitly or by inference, what Scripture does



say. But in speaking thus of Scripture as a criterion, which, if fairly applied, can never mislead, common sense points out that what is meant is, *Scripture studied in its original languages, and with all the light which learning, and especially the knowledge of primitive antiquity, can throw upon it.* He who can do no more than read the Bible in English may doubtless, under the teaching of God's Spirit, save his soul alive (which indeed he might do, even if the Bible were torn away from him, by believing all the Articles of the Christian Faith); but surely it stands to reason that such a man is in no position to settle a controversy or to determine a moot point. For example, in the controversy upon Infant Baptism, most persons would consider the question settled at once by the practice of the early Church, when it was still under the eye of the Apostles. Did they, or did they not at that time baptize infants? The New Testament gives no answer, except by inference. But the earliest Fathers give a very explicit answer. Justin says, for example, (writing about forty years after the Apostles,) that "certain Christians of sixty or seventy years of age, living in his days, were made disciples of Christ *from their childhood.*" Justin was not inspired; but what he says is fair historical evidence in favour of Infant Baptism, and evidence, it is clear, which cannot be appreciated by a person who has never heard of Justin. This, however, is only one out of numberless instances which might be adduced, to show how essential sound learning, and especially a knowledge of Primitive Christianity, is to a correct interpretation of Holy Scripture. Holding fast Scripture *as thus illustrated*, we cannot ourselves make any great error in controversy. And amid the abounding errors and contradictions of the day we may comfort ourselves by thinking that by means of them all, God is really showing to His Church some new aspect or aspects of the Truth. The Truth has a vitality in it still; and many dry rudiments of it, which at present lie dull and uninteresting in our minds, are yet destined to

expand and acquire a new significance. Let the mind be frankly open to any and every truth, however unfamiliar to us the first view of it, which may turn out to be in accordance with the teaching of the Apostles.

2. But, secondly, we learn from what has been said, a lesson of the possible co-existence of real Unity with total difference of form.

There has been a Church of God, ever since there was a promise for faith to lay hold of; but how different the forms which the Church has taken at different stages of her career! How different the Law from the Patriarchal Religion, the Prophets from the Law, and Christianity from the Prophets! How different the modern forms of Christianity from its ancient form! Looking to mere outward circumstances, (which do not the least affect the essentials of the Rite,) how different our present mode of celebrating the Lord's Supper, both from the primitive Institution, and from the early Christians' practice, according to which it was connected with a love-feast! Yet our hope and our faith is the same as that of Apostles and apostolic men, and our Sacraments are essentially one with theirs. Unity is not uniformity. Unity is harmony; uniformity is monotony. Do not stickle for uniformity, as long as unity is secured. The having the same order of Worship, the same liturgical observances, the same hymns and the same prayers in the same method of arrangement,—reader, the Unity of the Church of Christ does not consist in this. Nay, but in the spiritual worship of one Lord, in the common confession of one Faith, in the filial acknowledgment of one God and Father, who is above all, and through all, and in us all, we find the living, growing principles which knit together the different members of the Body of Christ, Jew and Greek, male and female, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free,—which cement the structure of the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the Jerusalem “built as a city that is at unity in itself.”

## CHAPTER II

*HOW IT FARED WITH THE EUCHARIST WHILE  
THE INSTITUTION WAS STILL UNDER THE  
EYE OF THE APOSTLES*

“When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. For in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the Church of God?”  
—I COR. xi. 20—22

**I**N the last Chapter we took a view of the Holy Eucharist in its cradle, wrapped, as it were, in its Paschal swaddling-clothes. We now open the second Chapter of its history. This second Chapter is drawn from the notice of it by the Apostle Paul, as celebrated in the Corinthian Church.

First, it is important to observe that, on St. Paul’s becoming an Apostle, the Institution was revealed to him by our Blessed LORD. Of it, as of other matters more purely doctrinal, he could say with truth, “I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” St. Paul was to hand down or deliver to all the Churches of his planting, together with the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel, this Gospel Institution. And accordingly some means must be taken of putting him in this respect on an exact level with the original Apostles. He must hear from the Lord Himself a recital of what took place at the last Supper, and must receive from the Lord’s own lips the commission which gives virtue and validity to the Sacrament. A transaction so important is not to be transmitted to him through the medium of any man’s memory; it is to come to him

pure and limpid from the fountain-head of Truth. And accordingly we read in the twenty-third verse of the Chapter before us: "For I have received *of the Lord*"—not of Peter, or John or Matthew, not even through their instrumentality, but of the Lord—"that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread,"—and then follows an account of the Institution, somewhat different from that given by the two first Evangelists, and having certain original touches in it, as where the Lord is made to speak of His Body being "*broken*" for us, and where the cup is called "*the New Testament in His Blood.*" St. Luke, the companion of St. Paul, who was not present at the original Institution, has evidently drawn his account from the Pauline revelation, not from the memory of the eleven. The coincidence of his narrative with St. Paul's account is a most interesting trace of the association of the two friends, so often incidentally noticed in the Acts of the Apostles.

My reader, what shall I say of those Institutes of the Christian Religion, to which a glorified Christ refers in a glorified state—Institutes upon which He holds a colloquy from heaven with His newly-admitted Apostle, in the solemn stillness, perhaps, of the wilds of Arabia? Shall I say of such Institutes that they are of more importance than the points of faith and practice, which He dwelt upon while on earth? Nay; without going thus far, we may surely say that any matter which the Lord Jesus, not content with advert- ing to it in the course of His ministry, has reiterated from heaven, must be a matter of the utmost moment to the well-being of His Church. And if there be any reader of these lines who either neglects the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, or thinks meanly of it,—any who has taken up with that false notion of the popular religionism, that in Christianity faith is everything, and Ordinance nothing,—I charge upon him to observe that the voice prescribing the Eucharistic Rite is a voice which issues forth not merely from the Pass-

over chamber, but also from the many mansions of the Father's House, and that the form which gives utterance to this voice is not that of a man of "marred visage," but that of Him whose "countenance is as the sun shineth in his strength," and before whose Resurrection-Glory Apostles fell to the earth confounded.

But to proceed with our history of the Eucharistic Rite.

In the account of the Natural Creation contained in the Book of Genesis, we find the various elements, light and darkness, vapours and water, earth and sea, in a state of confusion at first. Afterwards God divides the light from the darkness, the clouds from the waters, the earth from the sea, disentangling and giving them distinct spheres. Something very analogous to this we find in the history of the Primitive Church. It presents to us the appearance of a confused state of things, out of which order and method of arrangement is to dawn gradually. The Apostles at first have charge of the temporal as well as the spiritual concerns of the Church; but afterwards it is thought better that the administration of Church alms should be made over to special officers called deacons, and the Apostles be left at liberty to attend wholly to spiritual duties. Inspiration and the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost seem to have been at first poured indiscriminately over all the members of the Apostolic Church. "Sons and daughters," "young men and old," "servants and handmaidens," (*i. e.* male and female slaves), prophesied in those days and spake with tongues. And accordingly the distinction between ministers and people was not then by any means so clearly defined as it is now. Acts which we should reckon ministerial were not absolutely restricted to persons holding the ministerial office. The four daughters of St. Philip prophesied; Priscilla, as well as Aquila, expounded to Apollos the way of God more perfectly. Nowadays Inspiration speaks exclusively through the Bible,

which is its sole acknowledged repository, and the office of Christian teaching is considered the exclusive prerogative of those who are set apart for it by laying on of hands.—Here again is another point, looking in the same direction. The Mother-Church of all Churches,—that of Jerusalem,—began its career with a community of goods. “Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.” It was a beautiful theory. It was the realized ideal of what Christianity would make society, if its principles had free scope, and bore undisputed sway in every heart. But it was not an ideal which could be realized upon earth for more than one halcyon moment of the Church’s existence, when, in the earliest morning prime of spiritual life, heart bounded to meet heart in Christian love and joy. The case of Ananias and Sapphira soon showed that this arrangement of community of goods could be taken advantage of by covetous people within the fold of Christ. The offenders were made examples of; and after that time we read no more of any attempt at community of goods in any Church; probably even in the Church of Jerusalem, property found its way again into the original hands, and the poor and rich became once more distinct classes. The principle of brotherhood in Christ excluding all social distinctions was indeed heavenly and divine; but it could not be fully realized in the actual life of a wicked world, nay, nor in the actual life of an Apostolic Church, in which (although Apostolic) there were tares growing side by side with the wheat.

Now there was another point, besides that of property, in which the early Christians at first had mutual fellowship. Rich and poor supped together; ate their daily food at a common board. The plan seems to have been that each one should bring with him, in proportion to his means, a contribution of food, which was to be placed upon the table in the upper room, where their assemblies were held, and partaken of

in common. It was natural—nay, it was an almost certain consequence from the circumstances of the original Institution,—that the Lord's Supper should form part of, and be celebrated in the course of, this common meal. It had grown out of the half-social, half-religious entertainment of the Passover; and to an entertainment of a social character it was naturally annexed still. Accordingly it is intimated in the Acts of the Apostles that there was a daily celebration of the Eucharist in the Church of Jerusalem; daily of course it would be, because the Supper, or chief meal, must recur daily, and whenever it recurred, being the common meal of Christians, at which they met one another as Christians, it would surely be sanctified by the appointed commemoration of the Saviour's dying Love. So we read: "They continuing *daily* with one accord in the Temple" (this was their devotion as pious Jews), "and breaking bread from house to house" (this was their devotion as pious Christians), "did eat their meat" (partook of food) "with gladness and singleness of heart." There was a simple domestic joy about those early Eucharistic meals, which, alas! was soon to be dissipated.

For just as the crime and punishment of Ananias and Sapphira seem to have exploded the community of *property* in the Church of Jerusalem; so certain excesses in the Corinthian Church, in connexion with the common Eucharistic meal,—excesses punished by God's temporal judgment, and severely rebuked by His Apostle,—gradually exploded and put an end to the practice of combining the Sacrament with a meal at all. The richer Christians, opening their basket of provisions, and not waiting (it appears) till the whole Christian brotherhood had assembled, and the formal thanksgiving at the opening of the meal had been said, ate and drank to excess, while the poor (more especially if belated) found a most insufficient supper. We open our eyes wide with wonder at a desecration so totally unfamiliar to ourselves, so impossible under the circumstances of the modern Church; but the fact stands on

record in language altogether plain and incapable of being mistaken: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken."

The fact was, that the community of meals among the Christians, and the association of the Eucharist with a *bonâ fide* meal, was like the community of property,—a beautiful theory,—ay, and the true and high ideal of Christian Life; but a theory which could not be worked out, and an ideal which it was impossible to realize in an actual Church, having tares in it—that is, having unsound Christians in its bosom. So experience had shown St. Paul. And, accordingly, he, writing under the inspiration of God, and in the exercise of the Apostolic authority given him by Christ, cuts the knot which had hitherto bound together the meal and the Eucharist, and disentangles for ever the religious from the social element of the rite. "What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?" "If any man hunger, let him eat at home." Now as a meal has no use or significance except when one is hungry, this is as much as saying that the Lord's Supper was no more to form part and parcel of a meal. With which word of Apostolic authority, the religious element of the Lord's Supper disentangled itself and became a separate thing, just as when God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters," the light vapours rose from the aqueous mass, and hung suspended in the sky under the name of clouds.

There was a time, then, as we have seen,—the time of the Church's infancy,—when the supper or chief daily meal of Christians was a Sacrament. Those were days of great spirituality, intense unction, fervent zeal, warm love, when the brotherhood of Christians was as yet white as snow in Salmon. And it is curious to observe how, in any peculiarly strong glow of spiritual feeling, the strangeness of this original mixture between



the ideal and actual life of Christians, between the religious and the social, between the meal and the Sacrament, vanishes. There is an interesting anecdote to this effect in the life of Fletcher, the Vicar of Madeley,<sup>1</sup> a man who always breathed an atmosphere of faith and love, and panted after communion with God as the hart after the water-brooks. Towards the end of his life, when his soul was filled and his countenance radiant with love and joy, two friends (one of whom was the narrator) came to Madeley from a distance to visit him. Hearing of their arrival, and knowing the ride was a long one, he ordered the servant to bring them some refreshment, and hastened out into the yard to greet them as they were dismounting. Both were men of devout minds, to whom he might say the things of which his heart was full, and while they were engaged in putting up their horses, the good Vicar spoke to them of spiritual topics, and particularly of the love of Christ, and of the necessity of our being conformed to His image. He spoke out of the abundance of his heart, with an eye kindling and a face flushing, as he pursued those great themes; and his two guests knowing him to be doomed by his disease to death, and to be then hastening to a speedy vision of his Lord, on whose praises he was so eloquent, caught the spiritual contagion, and were lifted up for the time being into a higher moral atmosphere. At this juncture the servant entered with refreshments, which happened to be bread and wine. Fletcher catching sight of them, seemed seized by an uncontrollable impulse, and breaking the bread and pouring out the wine, delivered it to them with the customary Eucharistic formulary: "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee; the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee."

The narrator adds words to this effect, that, so far from being revolting or having the appearance of

<sup>1</sup> The anecdote is given from memory. I have not the book by me to verify the details.

desecration, it was the most solemn and impressive Sacrament he had ever received. We can well understand it. The action must not of course be drawn into a precedent by men like ourselves, who live on a very low level of spiritual attainment. But in Fletcher and his friends it was neither hypocritical nor irreverent. When men are in a high state of spiritual feeling, amounting almost to ecstasy, the exuberant devotion of their hearts will sometimes break through the usual forms of religious observance, and mix itself up with their daily life and common intercourse. In such a mood they take no heed of circumstantials: every thing is sanctified in their eyes; a stable becomes to them (was not Jesus born in a stable?) a Church, and a refreshment becomes a Eucharist. After all, it is only a momentary return to the quite primitive state of things, before the Sacrament was disconnected from the meal, the state of things depicted in the verse already quoted: "And they continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."

So many useful and interesting reflections arise from what has been said, that it is hard to find room for them all. We must select two or three from the mass.

1. Observe that St. Paul, while he forbids the Eucharist to be partaken of as a meal, and for the satisfaction of hunger, still stoutly maintains its social character, and indicates how appropriately this social character of the Ordinance is emblemized by the holy<sup>2</sup> loaf. One loaf is broken and distributed among

<sup>2</sup> This expression is not my own. It comes from the first Prayer Book of King Edward the Sixth, in which the fifth Rubric after the Communion runs thus:—

"And forsomuch as the Pastors and Curates within this realm shall continually find at their cost and charges in their cures sufficient bread and wine for the Holy Communion (as oft as their Parishioners shall be disposed for their spiritual comfort to receive the same), it is therefore ordered, that in recompense of such costs and charges, the Parishioners of every Parish shall offer

many ; all partake of and assimilate it, and so become one Body, the Body of Christ, which is by all assimilated. Hence the Eucharist is a Sacrament of our Communion with one another, no less than of our Communion with Christ. "For we being many are one bread [one loaf], and one body ; for we are all partakers of that one loaf." Hence our excellent Reformers, in purifying the old missal, have shown themselves extremely jealous of the social character of the rite. Even in the case of administration to a sick person, it is prescribed that three, or two at the least, must communicate with him ; and in the public Office we find this rubric : "If there be not above twenty persons in the Parish of discretion to receive the Communion ; yet there shall be no Communion, except four (or three at the least) communicate with the Priest." Private masses, at which the Priest alone communicated, altogether obscured this social feature of the rite, and so, as our Reformers rightly thought, imperilled its vitality. But no mere formal provision of the Ritual can secure that true union of heart and sympathy with our brother Christians, by which alone we can give to our Communion a really social character. Do we resort to them in a spirit of great kindness to others, "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any?" But even forbearance is only negative. Are we taking

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every Sunday, at the time of the Offertory, the just value and price of *the holy loaf* (with all such money and other things as were wont to be offered with the same), to the use of their Pastors and Curates, and that in such order and course as they were wont to find and pay the said *holy loaf*."

The expression is a pleasing one. But it should be remembered that our word "loaf" does not give an exact idea of the form of the Passover Cakes. I take the word "loaf" (Germ. Leib) to mean etymologically a lump or mass ; whereas the Passover Cakes were flat, round, and thin. Perhaps the form of the Romish Wafer was originally suggested by that of the Passover Cakes, though the account usually given of the form of the Wafer is that it was intended to represent the Denarius (or Roman penny), in reference to the pieces of silver for which our LORD was sold.

an active interest in the wants, trials, weaknesses, necessities of our fellow-Christians, not merely from the dictates of a natural compassion (which a heathen might be actuated by), but from a discerning acknowledgment of their brotherhood with us in one Faith, one Hope, one Baptism, one Adoption, one Redemption? Do we pray for them? And, specially in the celebration of the Holy Communion, do we refer their wants and wishes, no less than our own, to God, or coop ourselves up in the narrow range of our own concerns and sympathies? I believe that a vast share of the blessing of Public Ordinances of Religion generally is altogether missed and forfeited, because men will resort to them as Private Ordinances, thinking only of their own case, and not making an effort to throw themselves with an expansive sympathy into the case of others.

2. A word may be appropriately said upon the ordinary social meals of Christians. The Eucharist has now been torn away from them, and placed in a shrine of its own, removed from the possibility of desecration. But it were devoutly to be wished that we could see the stamp of the Eucharist,—its image and superscription,—resting upon all our social receptions of food. Still the rule holds good that we are to sanctify our necessary and common, no less than our religious actions, that “whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God.” The utmost mirthfulness of heart and of conversation may thus be sanctified, so long as nothing is said which trespasses on the bounds of modesty, reverence, and charity; for our LORD Himself was present at a wedding festival,—and a festival at which it is clear from the narrative that the conviviality had reached a considerable height. Do we sanctify our social entertainments by striving to realize His Presence at them, and thus by bidding Him to the board? And last, but not least, how is grace said? Is it sometimes forgotten altogether? oftener still mechanically and rapidly recited, without even a momentary

uplifting of the heart? Are not the ordinary graces (I only throw this out for consideration) somewhat too short to take hold of the mind? Is it not the case often with well-disposed persons that the grace is over before the attention can rally? Beautiful at all events are those longer graces once in popular use, but which have now retreated into the devout seclusion of the Academy, in which, according to the true old fashion, the form is interspersed with responds, simply said on common days, and on certain high festivals of the Church sweetly sung.

3. It is well by every means in our power to strive to sanctify common life, and ordinary engagements. It is not only well, it is necessary. No man is really religious at all who withdraws any part of his ordinary life from the influence and control of Religion, and confines his devotion to certain seasons and certain localities. And yet there is a wholesome warning for us all in the disentanglement of the Holy Communion from the social meal with which it had once been associated; and there is great truth and significance in the wise man's admonition, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Among certain religionists, there may be observed a sort of interlacing of the secular with the spiritual; a parade of religious topics where they are sure to be unfavourably received; proposals for prayer where the occasion and circumstantials are unsuitable, and the minds of the persons to whom it is proposed are not in tune for it; an unreserved manner of throwing abroad Divine Truth in ordinary conversation; all which in theory is right, and in an ideal state of things would find place, but in the actual state of the Church and the world is likely only to shock the one, and to incur the ridicule of the other. That these considerations should have weight with us, we are taught by those words of Him who spake as never man spake: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." There is a

great necessity for holy discrimination, and a greater still for a spirit of deep religious reverence, if we propose to introduce spiritual topics in general conversation. There is a feeling, innate in every human mind, of the distinctness between the sacred and the secular, which you will only do harm if you rudely violate. And it is a true and just feeling under the present economy of things, which is necessarily imperfect. That the Lord's Day should be esteemed above ordinary days; that the Church, or place of assembly for Christ's flock, should be esteemed above a common house (a sentiment, by the way, plainly in accordance with the mind of St. Paul in the passage before us: "What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the Church of God?"); that one class of men should be regarded as set apart for sacred functions, upon which functions ordinary men may not lawfully intrude,—all these feelings and habits of thought are the very safeguards of Religion in the minds of mankind at large, and, as being so, must not be disregarded or dealt rudely with. Under the present Dispensation things sacred must of necessity be separate from common things; and God's Ordinance has made them so. Be it ours by faith and hope to anticipate, and by spiritual diligence to hasten on, that happier period, when every day shall be a Sabbath of rest, spent in the sunshine of Christ's countenance; when there shall be no more any temple, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of the Heavenly City; when all shall be priests alike, and offer continually the sacrifice of Praise; when, finally, the Lord shall drink with us the new wine of spiritual joy at the marriage-supper of the Lamb; and the sacramental memorial of Him shall be superseded by His visible Presence in glory.

## PART I

### The Lych-Gate and the Precinct

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#### CHAPTER I

##### *OF THE LORD'S PRAYER AND THE COLLECT FOR PURITY*

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? If the Lord search the heart, I try the reins.”—JER. xvii. 9, 10

**I**N the Cathedral, and often in the Parish Church of our country, there are several stages of approach to the immediate precinct, in which stands the Table of the Lord, the point of sight for all the worshippers. First, there is the Choir (or Chancel), which at its further end contains this precinct. Then there is the Transept, then the Nave, and then, at the door of the Nave, the Porch of entrance. But around the building itself often lies a considerable enclosure, once used for the purpose of interment, to which access is gained by a gate, sometimes arched over, and made into a porch, and called the lych-gate or corpse-gate, from the circumstance that the Priest in the Burial Office there meets the corpse.

The Office of the Holy Communion, on the consideration of which we now enter, has similarly several stages of approach into its inmost sanctuary. The culminating act of the whole Service is, of course, the consecration and participation of the Elements.

But towards this act there are several advances. There is the "Tersanctus," or Seraphic Hymn of Praise, with the Prayer of Access. There are the Comfortable Words, by which we lift ourselves up to Praise,—resembling the steps by which we pass up into the Choir. There is the Exhortation, Confession, and Absolution,—the more immediate preparation, which may correspond with the Transept. Then comes that portion of the Office, at which non-communicants may be present, embracing the Collect, Epistle and Gospel, Creed, Sermon, Offertory, and Prayer for the Church Militant, and beginning with that which is the porch of the whole edifice, the Prayer for the Sovereign, or Chief Magistrate. What remains may be properly called the earlier preparation, corresponding to the precinct round the Church or Cathedral. It consists of the Ten Commandments,—the Law, which in its condemning power is to real Christians dead and buried, and cannot harm them. And to this Burial-ground of the Decalogue, which solemnizes the mind by its grave and stern associations, we are admitted by a little gate or porch, consisting of two short Prayers. It is in this Porch that we shall now place ourselves, to survey its construction. — The above illustration is, I readily grant, drawn from the fancy. Still it may be useful, if it serve to show the great care with which our Church seeks to prepare us for the highest Ordinance of Religion, and the gradual approaches, by which she leads the mind towards the inner sanctuary of these holy mysteries. Hence we have fence within fence, preparation within preparation. And the lesson is, of course, "If you desire to communicate worthily, see that you get your mind in order." These arrangements are the faithful echo made by our Church to that inspired warning: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

The Lord's Prayer, said without the Doxology or concluding clause (as will be found to be the case



throughout the Prayer Book, wherever the tone of the Service is rather that of Prayer than of Praise), opens the Office of the Communion. We shall not enter at all into the matter or substance of this Divine Prayer, as that would divert us at much too great length from our present purpose, but confine ourselves to a few remarks on the position which it holds. The Lord's Prayer may be regarded in two distinct lights, as a summary of Prayer, and as a model of Prayer. In the first of these lights it is the modern fashion to regard it, and under this view it is naturally introduced, not at the beginning, but at the end of Prayer. We feel (and the feeling is most just) that our Prayers are imperfect at best, and greatly need supplementing by some form in which there are no defects; that we omit oftentimes through haste, or ignorance, or superficiality of mind, to petition for some things which may be most desirable for us; and so at the end of our Private Prayers, or at the end of our Family Prayers, we recite the Lord's Prayer, as summing up all that we can want or wish for in a few pregnant words. A curious instance, by the way, of the different line in which modern and ancient thought travel, even where both are equally correct. The Prayer Book never introduces the Lord's Prayer at the close of any Service; it is always either at the opening, as here, or at the opening of a separate section of the office (like the Post-communion). The Morning and Evening Prayer were formerly opened with the versicle and respond, "O Lord, open Thou my lips," "And my mouth shall show forth Thy praise," which was immediately followed by the Lord's Prayer; and it was the Reformers who thought it expedient to prefix a short introduction, consisting of the Sentences, Exhortation, Confession, and Absolution. If this introduction be regarded as only preparatory, our Morning and Evening Office may be said still to open with the Lord's Prayer, as does the Communion Office.—Now this position of the Prayer shows that it is regarded as a model rather than as a summary. The

painter who is copying a picture, the sculptor who is copying a bust, in the first instance sets before him that which he designs to copy. This being done, he casts from time to time his eyes upon his model, and guides his hand accordingly. Now this was the view which the ancient Church (and our Liturgy, generally speaking, represents to us the views of the ancient Church) took of the Lord's Prayer. It was a perfect model to be placed before the mind for imitation, and therefore to be recited in the first instance, or at each fresh section of the Service, and to be reverted to mentally throughout. This is not the only view which may be taken of the Prayer, but it is a most true, and just, and Scriptural view. Let us imbibe it, if we have not yet done so, and embody it in our practice. Let us not rest content with the use of the Lord's Prayer as a form. Let us consider how we can bring our own private prayers into a closer conformity with the model. Let us bear in mind that the Lord's Prayer teaches us not only what to pray for, but also, if I may so say, what should be the proportions of our prayers. From the order of the petitions we learn the blessings which we should most covet, and from the spirituality of the greater number of them we learn how sparing, modest, and reserved should be our prayers for earthly blessings. And let me recommend, as a method of counteracting our partial tendencies in Prayer, that we should, from time to time, in our private devotions enlarge upon the Lord's Prayer by way of paraphrase. As in religious thought generally, so in prayer particularly, we are sadly apt to run in our own groove; and thus the frequent recurrence to and study of the Lord's Prayer is very desirable, as tending to give us a larger and more comprehensive range of sympathies.

We now come to the opening Collect of the Communion, which, together with the Lord's Prayer, formed anciently the priest's private preparation for the Office, which he was to repeat secretly. By our present arrangements it is to be said openly and aloud,

that all may participate in this preliminary act of devotion. It will be well in the first instance to lay before the reader the framework on which those wonderful compositions called Collects are constructed, that he may see how the parts of this Prayer are connected, and what is the one thought which knits together its various clauses in unity. The ground-plan, then, of a Collect is as follows. After the invocation, a foundation is laid for the petition by the recital of some doctrine, or of some fact of Gospel history, which is to be commemorated. Upon this foundation so laid down rises the petition or body of the prayer. Then in a perfect specimen, like the Collect before us, the petition has the wings of a holy aspiration given to it, whereupon it may soar to Heaven. Then follows the conclusion, which, in the case of Prayers not addressed to the Mediator, is always through the Mediator, and which sometimes involves a doxology or ascription of praise.—In the present Collect, the doctrine upon which the petition is based is that unto God “all hearts are open, and all desires known,” and that from Him “no secrets are hid.” The petition based upon this doctrine is, that He would “cleanse the thoughts of our heart by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit.” And finally the aspiration in which the mind contemplates the glorious result of the prayer,—the aspiration, which lends wings to the petition, and lifts it up to Heaven, is,—“that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name.”

Now in considering these several parts of our Collect, we will take the aspiration first, and so work backwards. “That we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name.”

The magnification of God’s Holy Name,—that is, the telling forth how great He is, in concert with the holy Angels,—is just what we are about to enter upon. The Holy Communion is (as we call it in one of the Post-communion prayers) “a sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving,” and accordingly, when the office is mounting to its climax, we join our voices with those

of the Seraphim who stand around the throne, and cry one to another (setting forth the moral grandeur and the glory of our God), "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty; Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory; glory be to Thee, O Lord most High." And in the close of the Office is equally heard the key-note of high praise and magnification. For as after the first Institution of the Ordinance the Divine Master and His disciples sang an hymn, before they went out unto the Mount of Olives, so before the final blessing we join in the morning hymn<sup>1</sup> of the early Christians, which begins with the anthem of the Angels at the Nativity, "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men."

One chief aspect then of the whole Service being Thanksgiving,—nay, the very word "Eucharist," which was in early times<sup>2</sup> appropriated to this Ordinance,

<sup>1</sup> This hymn was used in the time of Athanasius (early part of the fourth century) as part of the Morning Service for every day.

<sup>2</sup> Ignatius (supposed to have been, with Polycarp, a disciple of St. John) is probably the first uninspired writer who speaks of the Holy Communion as the Eucharist. See his Epistle to the Smyrnæans, ch. vi., where he says of certain heretics, against whom he is writing, "They abstain from Eucharist and Prayer, because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, of His goodness, raised from the dead."

Again, to the Philadelphians, ch. iv., "Let it be your endeavour to partake of one (and the same) Eucharist; for one is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one the cup for the Communion of His blood."

In the above passages it would seem as if *the Elements themselves* were called the Eucharist.

In the following passages *the Service* seems to be so called:—"Let that be accounted a valid Eucharist, which is under the Bishop, or him to whom the Bishop shall entrust the administration." (Smyrn. viii.)

"Endeavour then more frequently to assemble for Eucharist of God" (the Thanksgiving Service to God), "and for His glory." (Eph. xiii.)

"We have, however," says Mr. Palmer in his *Origines Liturgicæ*, "an earlier allusion to the Liturgy, under the title of *Eucharist*, or thanksgiving, in the first Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, where, in forbidding and reasoning against the practice of some persons, who used the miraculous gift of tongues

meaning "Thanksgiving Service,"—we reasonably place this aspect of it before us at the outset, and offer a fervent aspiration to Almighty God, that, as we are about to magnify His Name, we may magnify it "worthily."

But how shall this be? We cannot worthily magnify God's Holy Name, unless we love Him truly. All magnification of His Name which does not spring from true love, must necessarily be hollow-hearted, insincere, hypocritical, rotten at the core. And thus the latter part of our aspiration, "that we may worthily magnify Thy Holy Name," throws us back upon the former, "that we may perfectly" (that is, sincerely, and with all our powers) "love Thee." Then what is the true love of GOD for which we here pray? The mind is in no frame for this magnification, unless it loves GOD truly. What moral qualifications in ourselves does the love of GOD involve? It is easy to flatter ourselves we have it from our possessing a general religious sensibility, from an accessibility to good impressions, and from a certain tenderness of spirit which we discover in ourselves when the perfections of GOD, and specially His fatherly Love, are

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in an improper manner, namely, by celebrating the Liturgy in an unknown language, he says, 'When thou shalt *bless* with the Spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy *giving of thanks*, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?' The meaning of this passage is obvious: 'If thou shalt bless the Bread and Wine in an unknown language, which has been given to thee by the Holy Spirit, how shall the layman say Amen at the end of thy Thanksgiving (Eucharist), seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?'"

The same view is taken of this passage of St. Paul by Professor Blunt and Bishop Christopher Wordsworth. That the Apostle is alluding to the Holy Communion seems probable from Justin's description of its administration in the Primitive Church:—

"Bread is brought to the president of the assembly, and a cup of water and wine, and having received it, he puts up praise and *thanksgiving* to the Father of all, through the name of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. . . . And when he has finished his prayer and *thanksgiving*" (Eucharist), "all the people, with an acclamation, say *Amen*."

pathetically set forth. But the love of GOD must surely be the love of GOD's will; for to love GOD is to love His character, and there is nothing which expresses so much of a person's character as his will—his expressed mind. Do we then love GOD's will, or expressed mind, under all circumstances, and whatever forms it may assume? Do we love it, when it prescribes what is difficult to flesh and blood—forbids what is naturally gratifying to us in a high degree? Do we love it, and acquiesce in it lovingly, when it prescribes suffering for us, as well as when it allows us an easy lot and few trials? Do we at all events strive and pray to love it? To love GOD is to love His Name; and His Name, be it remembered, is Holiness as well as Love. Do we love Holiness? love the strictness of GOD's law? or do we desire, on the contrary, that its stringency as regards ourselves should be somewhat relaxed, that so high a standard of duty should not be insisted upon?—Do we honestly desire to be drawn into a still closer and closer intercourse with GOD (for that surely is a property of Love); or do we rather shrink from that closer intercourse, from the feeling that it might involve us in sacrifices for which we are not prepared?—Among men a mere groundless fancy may often go under the name of love; but to all higher forms of love moral congeniality between the parties is essential. Is there then between us and God any moral congeniality? Are we at all like GOD in His free and expansive sympathy with all creatures, irrational as well as rational? in His absolute detestation of sin? If not, what hinders? What is there in us uncongenial to GOD? Nothing at all, may be, in our lives. Nothing at all which struggles into visible development, and challenges notice. We may hope that comparatively few communicants live in the habit of violating GOD's law outwardly, or retain some *practice* which they know to be wrong. But are they therefore “worthy” communicants? Nay, this depends on the condition of the inner man of the heart. Are they *there* indulgent towards sin? Will they toy

with it in their imagination, though they may not dare to practise it? Are they upright of heart? or do they try to reason away those passages of God's Word, which at first sight, and to a simple and unsophisticated mind, seem to prescribe something to which they feel an invincible repugnance? Do they manfully act up to their convictions of truth and right, or enter into a course of special pleading with them, by way of proving them wrong? Are they looking for an earthly Paradise, and seeking to make their home here below? Are they lusting strongly after a position which they have not, while that which they have in the order of God's Providence affords an abundant field for usefulness and honourable service? All these are so many uncongenialities of the man's moral nature to God, so many divergences of the ever-oscillating needle of the heart from the pole to which it should always point truly. And these uncongenialities must be abolished, these divergences must be corrected, if the man is to love God perfectly. Love God perfectly he cannot, while contrary loves engage his heart. These contrary loves therefore must be expelled and renounced. And this can only be done by God's Spirit within being put forth to cleanse our hearts, and turn them from a cage of unclean birds into a Sanctuary, meet for the service of Praise. And the petition that God would by His Spirit effect this result forms the body of this admirable Collect: "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit." We desire that God would bring us into a right frame of mind for the magnification of His Holy Name: and as in order to this a purifying process is essential, we pray that the purifying process may take effect upon us.

We arrive now at the doctrine, which is the foundation on which the petition plants itself. And most instructive indeed is the connexion of thought between them, in virtue of which one rises out of the other. We pray God to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts. The prayer (like all prayers) is an expression

of our dependence upon Him to do that for us, which we cannot possibly do for ourselves. And why can we not do this particular thing for ourselves? Why can we not comply with that exhortation of the Apostle James, "Purify your hearts, ye double-minded." It is not only that, apart from God's Grace, we have not the moral power requisite. That is one reason, and a sufficient one; but there is another. We do not know the extent of the evil to be remedied. "The heart is deceitful above all things,"—above the smiling sea of the tropics, above the meteor of the marsh, above the mirage of the desert; and because it is thus deceitful, the depths of its wickedness are unknown to itself. Now if we are acquainted with our own depravities, if it is only long experience, under the discipline of the Spirit, which gives us even a glimpse into them, how shall we ever hope to cleanse them? The task is evidently as much above our wisdom as it is above our strength. In undertaking it by ourselves we should resemble a man, who should engage to purify a house, which had been tenanted by sufferers from infectious disease, by the ordinary modes of fumigation and ventilation, being ignorant that an open drain ran underneath it, which sent up its noisome exhalations through the ground-floor into the chambers. If such an one were aware what labour and expence it would cost him to alter the direction of the drain, he perhaps might say, "It is beyond my resources altogether to put that house in a wholesome condition; I must leave it to others better furnished for the enterprise." Well; there is a line of thought very analogous to this sentiment in the prayer before us. We pray God to cleanse the corruption of our hearts, on the ground that He, and He alone, knows them thoroughly. Unto Him, we remind ourselves at the outset, "all hearts be open, all desires known," or (as it is in the original Latin of this Collect) "unto Him every movement of the will speaks and hath a voice" (*cui omnis voluntas loquitur*). Striking expression! Yes; every movement of the human will, every stimulant of a



desire, every internal uneasiness which gives rise to appetite, hath an utterance—an utterance clear and articulate—for the ear of God. “He knoweth our thoughts afar off;”—sees them, while they are yet rising, pushing their way upward,—sees them, before they have yet germinated, beneath the soil of the heart. We can only rectify, or strive to rectify them, as soon as we become conscious of them. But His eye can detect them, before they have unfolded themselves in our consciousness; and His hand can reach them at that depth. And therefore under a sense of our utter helplessness to cleanse our hearts for ourselves, we pray Him to exert His knowledge and His power on our behalf, and, as He searches the heart and tries the reins, to expel the evil which only His eye fully discerns.

Now is not this first Porch to the Office of the Holy Communion very august and very appropriate? That we should be put into a right frame for the glorification of God, by the cleansing of our hearts from every sinful affection contrary to His Love,—a cleansing which can only be effected by Him, who is privy to our most secret thoughts,—what fitter preparative than this can be imagined for the Church’s great Sacrifice of Thanksgiving and Praise?

We have spoken of God’s privity to the worst corruptions of our hearts. Let us observe in conclusion, that those who are under the lead of grace He will indoctrinate more and more into a knowledge of themselves. Do not faint, therefore, but rather thank God and take courage, because in the progress of your Christian course, more and more disclosures are made to you of evil in yourself, which you suspected not before. If when we are weak (*i.e.* in our own apprehensions) then we are strong, the Lord could not deal more graciously with any man than by beating him out of conceit with himself, and teaching him experimentally the plague of his own heart. On no other

foundation can the fabric of trust in GOD be securely reared than upon that of absolute and entire self-distrust. Only pray that the disclosures made to you respecting Christ, and the sufficiency of His salvation and of His strength, may keep pace with those made to you on the subject of your own evil. For indeed the knowledge of ourselves, without a corresponding knowledge of GOD, would only plunge us into a dark night of hideous despair; and that saint prayed well and wisely, who prefaced his acts of Self-examination by these pregnant words:—

“ Show me myself, O Lord, by Thy Holy Spirit ;  
But show me also Thyself.”

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## CHAPTER II

### *OF THE DECALOGUE AND ITS RESPONDS*

“ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”—I COR. xi. 28

THE introduction of the Decalogue into the Office of the Holy Communion was the work of our Reformers. It has been strongly objected to by those who think it right to cavil at every liturgical arrangement which was originated at the Reformation; but we are persuaded, and we hope to show, that the objection is utterly groundless; nay, that the Decalogue could not possibly occupy a more appropriate place in any Christian Service. Even if there were nothing to be said from primitive antiquity in favour of its insertion here, surely the Liturgy of the Church is not to be regarded as something so fixed and stereotyped by primitive practice, that no modifications of it, no adaptations of it to an altered state of society, or to a different phase of religious sentiment, can ever be admitted. At the Reformation there was a great

burst of religious thought, which had hitherto been frozen by the prohibition virtually laid upon the Scriptures, and dammed up by the icy barriers of tradition. It was impossible, under such circumstances, to keep all things as they were, just as in a flood it is impossible to maintain the less stable of the old landmarks. It was desirable not only to purify the Service Book from all superstitious accretions which had gathered over it in the lapse of time, but also here and there, with wise and cautious hand, to introduce certain new and original features. God be praised, who, together with that great revolution of thought, gave us men who were abundantly qualified by learning and ability (as well as by piety) to guide it;—men, on the one hand, not capable of being run away with by the mere impulse of novelty, and yet who knew how to admit such alterations as were manifest improvements. While we fully appreciate the venerable prestige attaching to the Communion Office, as having come down to us, in its main features, from a very early period,—in part from the time of the Apostles themselves,—we will consider carefully this novel element of it, entirely on its own merits, and judge for ourselves (according to the revealed mind of God in Holy Scripture), whether it has been unsuitably foisted into a place where it has no right to be.

In the Collect for Purity, appended to the Lord's Prayer, with which the Office opens, we supplicate God before entering upon that Service of Praise and Thanksgiving, wherein especially we magnify His Holy Name, to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, that we magnify it *worthily*. And we recognise our dependence upon Him in this matter by reminding ourselves that He alone knows the heart; whereas from ourselves (such is the implication) our corruptions are often hidden. But as it is in all parts of our sanctification, so it is here. While God only can effect it, we must lend Him the hearty co-operation of our wills. He alone can detect our hidden evil; but

at the same time He requires that we should endeavour, as far as in us lies, to detect it for ourselves. The same authority which informs us that "the heart is deceitful above all things," and that the Lord alone searches the heart, enjoins upon us that most difficult and naturally distasteful of all spiritual exercises, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

Now by what rule shall we examine ourselves, so as to take the true gauge of our character and conduct? Shall it be by the fluctuating standard of public opinion? Shall it be by the average moral attainments of the society in which we move? Since this will not be the criterion applied to us at the last day, it were worse than useless, in a religious point of view,—it might make us the victims of a miserable delusion,—to apply it now: "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Let it, then, be GOD'S Law, which, enthroned in our own consciences, and appealed to by ourselves, sits in judgment on us even now.—Then here, for that purpose, is GOD'S Law confronting us. Here are the ten fundamental precepts of all religion and morality, which broke upon the ears of the chosen people "amid thunders, and lightnings, and voices, and the noise of the trumpet."

And thus, as in the Collect for Purity, the Church directs us to GOD as the purifier of the heart, and puts into our mouth the prayer that, as He only knows our evil, He would correct it,—so here she admonishes us, by introducing the Decalogue, to do our own part in this matter faithfully, and not to dispense ourselves from examination of conscience, on the plea that without GOD we can do nothing in this or any other part of our sanctification. That this is the true significance of the position, which the Decalogue holds in the Communion Office, I believe to be certain from the following passage of the Invitation:—

"The way and means thereto" (to a worthy participation of that holy Table) "is; First, to examine

your lives and conversations *by the rule of God's commandments*; and whereinsoever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended, either by will, word, or deed, there to bewail your own sinfulness, and to confess yourselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life."

Now it is a pregnant suggestion to this effect, that "the rule of God's commandments" stands in the forefront of the Office.

But it may be said; "Admitting that this is the significance of the Decalogue in its present position, and admitting, moreover, what cannot be denied, that it is a good and wholesome significance, why select the Decalogue in preference to the preceptive parts of the *New Testament*? The Decalogue is the Law given by Moses; but we Christians have a law given by Christ; and it is the word which He has spoken, not that which Moses has delivered, which will judge us at the last day. Why not rehearse the Beatitudes rather than the Decalogue, as being more spiritual, more searching, more generally redolent of the mind of Christ?"—There is certainly an element of reason and truth in this suggestion. There can be no question that the Law of our Lawgiver,—the Evangelical Law,—reaches far beyond the outward actions to the thoughts and intents of the heart. There can be no question that formal and outward restraint (and most of the Ten Commandments are, in their letter, formal and outward) is not of the character of this new Law;—that its restraint is by rectification of the inward principle, rather than by placing a barrier on the outward conduct. There can be no question that, if we be led by the Spirit, we are not under the Law;—that if we be under the lead of Grace, the Law is dead to us,—dead in its condemning power, having already fastened on our LORD as its Victim; dead, too, in its literal aspect, as a mere husk or shell of outward rules, above which we have risen to the freedom of a spiritual obedience. I say in its literal aspect; for the Law may be regarded in two ways, either as a series

of literal restrictions, or as wrapping up implicitly the whole of man's duty towards GOD and his neighbour. In the latter aspect, as well as in the former, the Inspired Writers of the New Testament view the Law. "I know," says St. Paul to the Romans, "that the law is spiritual." And again, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And our LORD, being asked which is the first and great commandment, reduces the whole moral code to a spiritual summary thus: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Let each precept be viewed as a law for the heart as well as for the conduct,—let us read alongside of each the spiritual exposition which the New Testament enables us to make of it,—alongside of the third and ninth commandment, "But I say unto you, Swear not at all;" "Above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation;" "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment;"—alongside of the sixth, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer;"—alongside of the tenth, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth;" alongside of the fourth, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day;"—and then the Law, instead of appearing any longer to be a dry framework or skeleton of outward rules, becomes filled in with the warm flesh and blood of an animated and spiritual obedience. And if the Law, as we are solemnly assured by the Apostles

and their Master, can only be fulfilled by Love, can the rehearsal of the Law be out of place at this moment, when we are about to celebrate the Feast of Love,—a feast commemorative of the Love of Christ,—symbolical also of the Love which ought to subsist between Christian brethren; nay, a Feast which, when duly partaken of, is the ordained instrumentality of cementing our union both with our crucified Head and all His members? And that the Decalogue in this place is to be regarded in its Christian and spiritual aspect,—as the Law of Love, and which can only be by Love fulfilled,—there is an indication, which must by no means be overlooked, in the responds with which it is interspersed.

We will exhibit shortly the rationale of these responds, and then glance at their meaning.

The responds then stand in exactly the same relation to the Ten Commandments as the "Gloria Patri" does to the Psalms. We make large use of the Psalms in Divine Service, saying or singing them through, from beginning to end, every month. Now the Psalms were originally Jewish hymns, just as the Decalogue was originally a Jewish code; and if interpreted in the bare letter, without any reference to Gospel blessings, might seem to be quite as inappropriate to a Christian Service as the Decalogue. What have we to do, it might be said, with the triumphs and distresses of David, with the history of the children of Israel, with the Babylonish captivity, or other Jewish interests, which form the subject of so many of the Psalms? And the answer is, that we have nothing to do with these things in their local and circumscribed reference; but that since David and his fortunes are typical of Christ and His fortunes, since the pilgrimage of Israel is a foreshadowing of the Christian's pilgrimage, and the Babylonish captivity a figure of the captivity under sin and Satan, from which our Redeemer releases us, the Psalms which treat of these things have for us an undercurrent of spiritual significance; we, as Christians, having our vision purged by the Holy Spirit, see in

them prophecies of Christ and His Redemption, so that they become in our mouths new songs—old, it may be, in the letter, but sung by us not “in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit.” And to indicate this,—to show that we attach to them, in reciting them, a Christian significance, at the end of every Psalm throughout the year is repeated “Gloria Patri,” being an ascription of glory to the Blessed Trinity. Now the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity may appropriately be called the full blossom of Gospel Revelation. This is the culminating mystery of our Faith, into the acknowledgment of which we are, by the Lord’s commandment, baptized. And, therefore, by reciting a canticle involving this doctrine at the end of each Psalm, we show that we mentally turn the Psalm into a Christian hymn, and are singing it in its Christian significance. In the Psalm itself its literal and spiritual meanings are mixed up, and cross one another, like the threads in a tissue which is composed of different materials; but in the *end* of each Psalm the spiritual meaning comes out pure and unmixed, just as the ornamental fringe round a piece of tissue might be formed of threads of only one material,—gold, or ruby, or blue, as the case might be. Now our mode of dealing with the Decalogue in the Communion Office is precisely similar. After each of its clauses is said, or sung, a respond, which christianizes the precept, takes it out of the sphere of the Law, and plants it in that of the Gospel, recognises it as part of the Law of Love. The terms of the Gospel Covenant, as distinct from that of the Law, are thus given by the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, quoting from the Prophet Jeremiah: “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and *write them in their hearts*: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. *For I will be*



*merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*" Evidently the respond is merely a compendious petition that God would fulfil to us the terms of this evangelical Covenant, being merciful to our unrighteousness, and writing His laws in our hearts: "*Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law; write all these Thy laws in our hearts, we beseech Thee.*" And each commandment in succession is christianized and spiritualized thereby; christianized,—for in whom, but in Christ, have we redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins? spiritualized, for we pray that our *hearts* may be inclined to keep each law,—that all the laws may be written in them,—showing that we understand much more by each precept than a mere external restraint upon our actions.

If any thing more were necessary to justify the introduction of the Decalogue into the Communion Office, it would be the consideration that without it the Service would lack the completeness which now it has. Were the Decalogue absent, this Office would contain hardly any portion of the Old Testament,—no portion of it necessarily; for those two or three Old Testament sentences which occur in the Offertory might be omitted at the discretion of the Priest. This would be intrinsically a defect; for the Communion is the highest of all offices; and it is meet that in it the Old Testament should be formally recognised as the ground, basis, and source of the New. Moreover, it would be a departure from primitive custom; for as early as Justin Martyr, a writer of the second century, we find the practice mentioned of reading in the Church the Gospels and Epistles after *the Law and the Prophets*; and Tertullian, writing at the end of the same century, has these remarkable words, descriptive of Christian worship in his days: "The Church mixeth the Law and the Prophets with the Evangelical and Apostolical writings, and thence drinketh in the faith." Liturgically considered, the Decalogue is to be

regarded as a lesson from the Law, just as the Epistle and the Gospel are lessons from different parts of the New Testament.

It may be said, doubtless, that though the Law, by the testimony of the New Testament writers themselves, is spiritual in its inner significance, still its tones are stern and harsh, repulsive and forbidding, breathing commination rather than love. And this is more or less true. There is a stern, solemn tone in the very style of the Ten Commandments, which, if I may so say, holds the profane and careless at arm's length. But is this any objection to them in the present position which they hold? Is it not rather a recommendation? We have already instituted a comparison between the Decalogue, as an approach to the Communion Office, and the precinct used for interments, which lies around many of our old Parish Churches. And we now recur for a moment to this image. We should desire, no doubt, that our associations with the House of God might be all bright and happy. We should desire to connect with the sacred building thoughts of delightful hours spent within its walls in communion with God through Christ, the experience of which might make us re-echo the sentiments of the Psalmist: "O how amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord. . . . For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand."

But are the stern, chill associations of Death unsuitable as a preparative of the mind, before we enter within the consecrated walls? Rather the reverse. To be reminded of mortality, of the precariousness of life, of the penalty of sin, and of the havoc it has made, is a fitting and edifying memorial, while our feet are on the threshold of the House of Prayer. Not that those graves can daunt us, now Christ has died. In full sight of them, and in prospect of their yawning one day for himself, the true believer can cry, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Well, so it is with the Ten Commandments, or

Covenant of works, as an approach to the Communion Office. Their stern legal tone excites a solemnity of feeling in the intelligent hearer, by no means inappropriate to the high Office which they introduce. We bethink ourselves that this is a broken law,—a law which in spirit, if not in letter, we have violated over and over again, and every statute of which, understood in the length and breadth of its requirements, is voiceful with condemnation. But what then? Does the Law frighten us, as well as solemnize our thoughts? Not for a moment, if we are among those who are led by the Spirit. In that case it is dead to us,—has altogether lost its hold,—and we are not children to be frightened by ghosts. In this case (Oh great joy and signal triumph!) our Surety and Representative has answered and satisfied all its demands, whether of penalty or righteousness; and the Law is to us nothing more than the framework of that spiritual obedience, which we owe to Grace. Is it then the case,—this is the question with which we will take leave of our subject,—that we are at present led by the Spirit? Observe, the Apostle's word is "led." He does not say "moved:" for movements of the Spirit, pricks and stings from that inward monitor, are common to all the baptized, and afford no ground of distinction between man and man. Nor does he say "driven" or "compelled" by the Spirit; for to compel a moral agent is to destroy his moral agency altogether, and reduce him to a machine. But he says, "led" by the Spirit,—not merely moved, but following; not dragged, but following freely, willingly, and with loving consent. Thrice happy we, if it be so with us. We may triumph in the Law; for it cannot condemn us. And our Communion Feast may be additionally sweetened by the thought, that it has been fulfilled for us, and is being and will be, under the guidance of Grace, more entirely fulfilled in us. Amen.

## PART II

### The Western Porch and the Nave

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#### CHAPTER I

##### *OF THE COLLECT FOR THE SOVEREIGN AND THE PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT*

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; “For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”—1 TIM. ii. 1, 2

THE Collect for the Sovereign and the Prayer for the Church Militant stand respectively at the beginning and the end of one tract or section of the Communion Service, which tract or section we have designated generally as the nave of the sacred Edifice. Moreover, they are partly the same in kind, since the Prayer for the Church Militant embraces the Sovereign by name, as well as all other members of the Church upon earth. And, thirdly, the subjects of both Collect and Prayer are prescribed and made binding upon us by the inspired precept of St. Paul, who exhorts us to remember “all men” generally in our prayers, and specially “kings, and all that are in authority.”

For the right understanding of this precept, it must be observed that the Epistles to Timothy and Titus are of a wholly different character from the other

Apostolical Epistles. They are addressed to Bishops in their official capacity, and give rules for the administration of the Church, and for the deportment and the teaching of those who are set to govern it. In the eighteenth verse of the first Chapter of the first of these Epistles, St. Paul had given Timothy a commission in general terms. In the first verse of the succeeding Chapter, he begins to unfold this commission in its various particulars. Now what is the first particular which he insists upon? He is directing the Bishop of Ephesus as to the administration of Public Service in the Church. Men, he says, are to conduct the public prayers, and to give Christian instruction (for the words, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting," should certainly be rendered, "I will that *the* men be the persons to offer up prayer in every place"),—the women are to appear in the congregation in seemly and modest attire, and to learn in silence, never assuming the character of teachers;—this is the substance of the Chapter; but what is the emphatic direction with which it opens? What does the Apostle Paul regard as the most important point in Public Worship? To what religious exercise does he give the first place, in time, or in importance, or in both? "I exhort therefore, that, *first of all*, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Observe how sovereigns are singled out from the rest of mankind, and particularly specified as those on whose decisions and acts the welfare of the commonwealth mainly depends. And when the character of the authorities of that day is considered, the precept seems to come to us, who live under Christian authorities, in a doubly imperative and obligatory form. The master of the Roman world, at the time St. Paul wrote these words, was one whose name has passed into a proverb of tyranny and wickedness—the odious Nero. If the First Epistle to Timothy is

rightly assigned to the year 65, it was in the previous year that the great conflagration had taken place, which laid in ashes three of the four quarters of Rome, and which the tyrannical emperor (himself suspected of the crime) had made a pretext for the cruel persecution of the Christians. It was with such specimens of authority as these before his eyes that St. Paul, directing a Christian Bishop as to the celebration of Public Worship in the Church, enjoins in the first place, or as a matter of primary importance, that prayer in all its forms,—special entreaty, solemn address, urgent solicitation, thanksgiving for successes,—should be made in behalf of all that are in authority. The object of these prayers was obvious—more obvious perhaps, though not (we believe) more real, than is the object of such prayers nowadays. Christians were then a harassed and a persecuted sect. The temporal authority in those days set its face against them, to root them out of the earth. It was a great point for them to have princes favourably disposed to them, who would allow them the exercise of their religion without molestation. Now the Lord could make any prince thus favourably disposed towards them: for (as an inspired king informs us) “the king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of waters; He turneth it whithersoever He will.” And if it were turned in favour of the Christians, as it might be by their prayers, then they would “lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,” or, to express the same thought in the terse language of one of our collects, God’s Church would joyfully serve Him in all godly quietness. There was every ground, then, for praying for the powers that be, that the blessings conferred upon them might redound to the Christians in outward peace and inward tranquillity.

Like most of the ecclesiastical arrangements of Christianity, this practice of offering public prayer for those in authority, had its origin in the customs of the synagogue and the Temple. In the Book of Ezra we find a decree of Darius for the assistance of the Jews

in rebuilding their Temple, which makes it obligatory upon his subjects in Palestine to furnish them, "according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem," with victims, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, "that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of Heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons." This the Jews appear to have done most conscientiously ever after the Captivity; and when they passed under the Roman yoke, the sacrifices and prayers were transferred to the account of their new governors. We find from Josephus that "they offered sacrifices twice a day for Cæsar and for the Roman people." And it is indeed a most observable fact, illustrative of the quietness and peace which may be expected from prayers for rulers, that this same historian Josephus traces up the beginning of the last war with the Romans to the omission, by ill counsel, of the usual sacrifice for Cæsar. The passage is of sufficient interest to be quoted: "At the same time Eleazar, the son of Ananias the high priest, a very bold youth, who was at that time governor of the Temple, persuaded those that officiated in the divine service to receive no gift or sacrifice for any foreigner. And this was the true beginning of our war with the Romans; for they rejected the sacrifice of Cæsar on this account: and when many of the chief priests and principal men besought them not to omit the sacrifice, which it was customary for them to offer for their princes, they would not be prevailed upon." Hereupon, the historian goes on to say, a council was held by the chief priests and principal Pharisees, who besought the innovators to consider that it had been an immemorial custom to receive gifts for the Temple and sacrifices from foreigners, and that the rejection of sacrifices, when tendered by the Emperor, would not only irritate the Romans, and bring on a war with them, but also "would introduce a novel rule of Divine Worship." However, the bigots would not hearken, and the war which originated in their abjuring prayers and sacrifices for Cæsar, ended in the

demolition of their Temple by Cæsar, and the abolition of sacrifice altogether.

We have seen that prayers even for heathen Sovereigns were practised by the Jewish Church ; that the discontinuance of them—which was a breach of long custom—had a most disastrous result ; and that the Christian Apostle St. Paul makes the same practice binding upon Christian assemblies by a precept to which he attaches first-rate importance. Now see how closely our Prayer Book is formed on the Scriptural model. The Communion Office is the chief Service of the Church ; for some time it was the exclusive Service of Christians, as Christians ; so entirely so, that by the word Liturgy in the early times (which has since been extended to all the Offices comprised in one volume) was meant nothing else than merely the Form and Order of celebrating the Holy Communion. Now in our Communion Service, after we have passed through the introductory portion—the Collect for Purity, and the Ten Commandments, which (as we have seen) suggest, and (spiritually understood) constitute the rule of, Self-examination—we are immediately confronted by the Collects for the Sovereign, which, at a later period of the Office, find an echo, and, if I may so say, an expansion and development in the Prayer for the Church Militant. I say an expansion and development ; for kings are the shepherds of the people in matters temporal ; and in this fuller prayer we are led on to mention also their shepherds in spiritual matters, and thence to the necessities of the flock itself, and of such members of it especially as are present on this occasion. Now can any arrangement be more conformable than this to the Apostolic precept in the text, “ I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ; for kings, and for all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty ? ”

We are about to offer the Christian sacrifices, which God demands at our hands, the sacrifices of alms, of



praise and thanksgiving, of ourselves, our souls and bodies. And with these sacrifices of sweet savours, we mingle prayers, as the Jews did of old, "for the king and for his sons,"—nay, and for the whole Church which Christ redeemed with His most precious Blood. Independently of the Apostolic precept, and of the practice of the Church of God in all time, is not this arrangement intrinsically suitable to the occasion? We are about to celebrate the Feast of Love, and we inaugurate it by a prayer of love for all men,—by an expression of sympathy with those who are saddled with a heavy responsibility,—with those who have charge of others,—with all who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity,—yea, an expression of sympathy with, and thankfulness for, those who have departed this life in God's faith and fear.

If our hearts be in such a state that they cannot yield sympathy to our brethren, and so cannot sincerely offer prayer for those of them who still live, or thanksgiving for the departed, can they be in a state fit to avail themselves of the Holy Festival?

It may be said, no doubt, and said most truly, that the relations between rulers and subjects have for the most part altered very materially since St. Paul wrote the precept on which we have been commenting. But then, as we have already hinted, this circumstance makes the precept, in a certain point of view at least, rather more than less stringent. If a heathen ruler is to be solemnly commended to God in the prayers of the Church,—one who was estranged from Christians in feeling and in principle, one who might be hostile to them, and who might at any time appear in the attitude of a persecutor,—how fervent should be our prayers for those Sovereigns, who are embraced under the same Faith and the same Baptism with ourselves, inasmuch as our sympathy with them (and sympathy is the only source of sincere intercessory prayer) must necessarily be so much greater. But put sympathy out of the question for a moment; and regard the

object of these prayers as not so much the welfare of the Sovereign himself, as that of the people committed to his charge. It may then be alleged that in constitutional countries, like our own, where the power which the Crown actually exercises is very much circumscribed, the disposition and conduct of the person wearing it is of comparatively little moment to the Church and nation, and that where the king is a pageant, in whose name government is carried on, rather than a real force in government, there is a species of almost mockery in using forms of Prayer which recognise the well-being of all classes as dependent, to a very great extent, upon the principles which actuate the ruler. But when we look more closely into the subject, we shall see that this is an ill-considered and a shallow objection. Immense power may be exerted in the way of influence, where there is only a vestige and shadow of legal power. The law of this country gives the master of a family no power whatever over his domestic servants; it is open to them to quit his service whenever they please; nor can he even punish criminal misconduct in them; he can do no more than get it punished, after it is proved, by the public functionaries of justice. Yet who will seriously maintain that no moral power of influence attaches to the position of a master of a household? Who will assert that the character and conduct of a man in this position has no weight with his domestics, simply because he cannot by law punish or restrain them? Who will assert that the household is as likely to be well governed, well disciplined, and well principled, if the master is debauched and licentious, and neglects altogether, not Family Prayer only, but Public Worship, as if his habits were steady, his morals perfectly pure, and his religious exercises regularly and devoutly performed? Similarly, the power of moral influence vested in the Sovereign of this country, in virtue of her position as Sovereign, is immensely strong, however much diminution or circumscription the legal prerogative may have suffered by the encroachment of the democratic

element upon the ancient constitution. Parliament may frame the laws ; and the Sovereign's power of refusing assent to such laws, though still theoretically recognised, may have fallen into abeyance, and be practically inoperative as a check ; but upon Parliament itself, and upon the nation which is represented in Parliament, the Sovereign will always be able to exert a moral influence quite out of the reach of any person of an inferior grade. Nor can any reasonable person doubt that the Sovereign's moral influence, so long as his position and the prestige of his position remains, will be a strong determining force in the career of the nation. All classes, by an unavoidable instinct of our nature, look up to the class above them, copy their manners, take their tone, form themselves upon their model ; and thus it comes to pass that the force of the example set in high places is insensibly transmitted to the extremities of the system. Add to which the very important consideration that God deals not with men as mere units, but views nations and Churches as summed up in their ostensible heads and representatives, and that thus a prince who rules in righteousness proves a blessing—not merely by the natural force of example, but by a general law, which pervades the Divine administration—to all his subjects. How happy should we account ourselves that this doctrine of the influence of sovereigns is for us a joyful subject of contemplation,—one which we delight to look full in the face, instead of (as might be the case in the reign of a depraved Prince) shuddering at and shrinking from ! For if ever in any country or at any period the character of the Sovereign has been such as to throw the antiseptic salt of a wholesome example into the spring of national life, and to be a pattern to all classes of moral purity and the domestic virtues, this has been the case, we are both proud and thankful to acknowledge, in our own land and times. For her our prayers may rise to Heaven in the most solemn acts of Divine Worship, with the comfortable assurance that it has pleased God in part to answer them

already!—Very critical, too, and therefore urgently demanding our prayers, is the position of the heir to the throne, and of all those who stand around it, and might, under certain contingencies, become heirs. Might not the English Church really determine for good the destinies of the English nation, if upon all members of the reigning house she succeeded, by fervent prayers to the Majesty of Heaven, in drawing down the grace and blessing of the Almighty?

The above remarks will, we trust, help to relieve the State Prayers of our Prayer Book, as they are called, from that formality, cold ceremoniousness, and want of interest, which attach to them in many minds,—well disposed in the main, but wretchedly narrow in their sympathies, and narrow also in their conception of the virtue of Intercessory Prayer. If, however, we desire a softening element in prayers of this description; if we desire to be brought out of the atmosphere of what may seem to be titles and compliments, into that of our common humanity,—nowhere is this done for us with such simple and touching pathos as in the latter part of the Prayer for the Church Militant. For there the different forms of human sorrow,—that sorrow which makes all mankind of one kin, and puts the sovereign on a level with the serf,—are brought before the mind; and we implore the Great Healer “of His goodness to comfort and succour all them, who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.” Here is calamity, here is mourning, here is poverty, here is broken health, and if there be any other form of human woe, all presented to the eye of the Divine Compassion in five simple words of intense supplication. To Him who lives environed by the glories of Heaven, and the Hallelujahs of Seraphim, what a lazar-house of miseries must the earth be! How like a pool of Bethesda, with its great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, and withered,—with its restless pining and moaning, and its cruelly disappointed hopes! Can we think of this multitude of sorrows without sympathy, with-

out at least a fervent desire to recommend it to God? And if we can think of it so, are we prepared to partake of the Feast of Love? Have we in that case any thing of His mind, who, upon the sight of the deaf and dumb, sighed, as He looked up to Heaven; who wept, as He stood between sorrowing sisters at Lazarus' grave? And if we have nothing of His mind, shall we present ourselves to hold Communion with Him at His Table?

But there is a yet more touching suggestion in this prayer, which can hardly fail to reach the heart. There are those Christians (and some of them possibly among our own nearest and dearest) whose troubles, sorrows, and labours have reached their climax, and who have now passed beyond our sight into that realm beyond the grave, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." If to follow them with prayer were presumptuous, as being beyond the warrant of God's Word, we may at least follow them with thanksgiving. The angels strike their golden harps, as fresh souls are won to God in this world. Shall we not suppose that they strike them when those souls are taken home to Him,—released from the body of sin and death? And may we not join our poor voices with that angelic symphony? And may we not also implore grace for ourselves to follow their faith, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? Yes, surely! it is an unloving spirit, and one totally uncongenial with the mind of Christ and His Church, which would cut us off from this solemn commemoration before God of those who have departed this life in His faith and fear. This is the one exercise of devotion by which the communion of living Christians with departed saints,—their fellowship with us of interests, of hopes, of thankfulness, of adoration,—is recognised. As such we believe that the Liturgy would be imperfect and mutilated without it. We believe that without this clause<sup>2</sup> in the Prayer

<sup>2</sup> In the first Reformed Prayer Book (1549) the sentence bidding this Prayer ran merely, "Let us pray for the whole state

for the Church Militant, the heart would crave something which it would not find in the highest Office of the Church. For those who have lost Christian friends, who once walked side by side with them in this troublesome world, cannot banish the thought of such friends in their approaches to God. The departed ones seem to stand on the other side of the river of Death, and beckon us to cross, as they have crossed, under the sheltering wing of the Redeemer. And most precious is the thought that, as they are with Him, wrapt in a communion closer than any which can be enjoyed on earth, whenever we truly seek Him, we draw nigh (though unconsciously and invisibly) to their spirits. For the nearer the rays of a circle approach to their common centre, so much the nearer of necessity they draw to one another. Christ is the one meeting-point of the faith of the living, and of the sight of the dead; and thus in Him our faith hath communion with their sight. For we are come" (not, are to come, but, *are come*) "unto Mount

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of Christ's Church." And a *prayer* for the departed was inserted to this effect:—"We commend unto Thy mercy, O Lord, all other Thy servants, which are departed hence from us with the sign of faith, and now do rest in the sleep of peace: Grant unto them, we beseech Thee, Thy mercy and everlasting peace, and that, at the day of the general Resurrection, we and all they which be of the mystical body of Thy Son may all together be set on His right hand, and hear that His most joyful voice: Come unto me, O ye that be blessed of my Father, and possess the Kingdom," &c.

In the Prayer Book of 1552 all mention of the dead was omitted, and to the heading of it were added the words, "militant here in earth."

This alteration was made in compliance with Bucer's strictures, one of which seems somewhat far-fetched:—"I should be unwilling in that word—*sleep of peace*—to give occasion of gratifying those who affirm that the departed in the Lord sleep (even as to their souls) unto the last day."

In 1661, after the Savoy Conference, when the doctrine of Purgatory had been extirpated, the present clause *giving thanks for* all those who have departed this life in GOD's faith and fear, and praying for grace to follow their example, was inserted, and is surely a most valuable feature of the Prayer.

Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

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## CHAPTER II

### *OF THE COLLECTS*

"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."—ECCLES. v. 2

WE have already sketched out the divisions of the Communion Service, according to the order in which they stand, and shown the relation to one another of its consecutive parts. But the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, to which we now come, suggest to us a division on another principle. There is, then, a part of the Communion Service, which is constant—used under all circumstances, whatever be the season of the year, and never subject to change. And, on the other hand, there is a variable element in the Service—a part which alters every week, or on certain high and solemn occasions. This part is composed of the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, and the proper Preface.

A distinction of a similar kind runs through the daily Morning and Evening Prayer. The Psalms and Lessons vary every day; the Sunday Morning Lessons not only vary, but are a departure from the orderly course of reading the Old Testament through annually; the Collect, as in the Communion Service, varies every week; but all these variable elements are inserted into a framework, which is constant and fixed.

Before we go farther, may we not learn a lesson from

what has been already said? Our Prayer Book may be regarded as an extended comment on the Lord's Prayer; it is the voice of the Church, in subordination to that of Christ, teaching us to pray. In the Public Service of the Church, if we will only acquaint ourselves with it thoroughly by study and thought, we shall find hints, many and edifying, for the conduct of *Private* Prayer. All devout persons have at times felt that the outline and general scheme of our prayers cannot vary much. It is not desirable that it should. Every morning we have much the same mercies to acknowledge, and much the same graces to supplicate; every night we have much the same sins to deplore. We say, much the same; not entirely. Even in the most regular and uneventful life one day's course does not quite tally with another's. The day is occasionally signalized by special mercies, special answers to prayer, special temptations, special falls,—all which it is the part of Self-examination to bring to light. When brought to light, how shall we deal with them? The answer is, "Weave into the framework of your ordinary prayers some brief notice of these special occasions." The bulk of your prayer will still be—must be—more or less of a form, by which I mean that it will always run in the same, or nearly the same words, or, if not this, will always express the same sentiments; but under the different heads of confession, thanksgiving, intercession, and so forth, you can profitably diverge from the beaten track to notice any particular circumstance, whether of humiliation, gratitude, or special suit for others. The profitable method of prayer must, after all, be a matter of personal experience; and we confidently appeal to those who cultivate habits of prayer, to tell us whether its spirit is not best caught by *this* method,—variations upon an ordinary framework, by following out in the midst of it any particular leadings of the mind. If so, this is the very lesson which the variable Collects and Psalms of our Prayer Book, inserted into its fixed outline, teach us.



But this is by no means the only (or the main) lesson regarding Prayer, which we learn from our Collects.

The passage which stands at the head of this Chapter warns the worshipper against two great faults, which vitiate the sacrifice of fools, inconsiderateness and diffuseness. Both faults are traced up by the inspired writer to one root—irreverence. A petitioner coming to sue to an *earthly* sovereign, draws up his petition beforehand, and carefully considers the terms of it. And moreover, in presenting it, he does not allow himself to be tedious to the monarch; his interview would be cut short, if he showed a disposition to protract it beyond the natural limits of the occasion. In our petitions to the King of kings, as He sits upon the Throne of Grace, surrounded by all the host of Heaven on His right hand and on His left, we must observe a reverence similar in kind, though proportionably intensified in degree. What we purpose to lay before Him must be considered and weighed beforehand; it must not be a hasty wish, or a foolish, ill-considered aspiration: we must be sure so to guard it, if it be a petition for earthly blessings, that the granting it on the part of God may not turn out to us rather a bane than a boon. And, secondly, in stating our desires, we must not be diffuse or rambling. As the Supper of the Lord must not be allowed to degenerate into a common meal, so stated Prayer must not be allowed to slip into a familiar colloquy with God, “as a man talketh with his friend.” The mind should be braced up to the great exercise, and its tension not relaxed until the exercise is over, and we have quitted the Throne of Grace.

Such seems to be the meaning of Solomon in this most weighty verse; and the sentiment is echoed very distinctly by a greater than Solomon, when announcing His new Law in the Sermon on the Mount. “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them:

for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him."

He who in the Agony of the Garden prayed three times, saying the same words, does not for a moment censure as vain *such* repetitions in prayer as flow from fervour of spirit. What He forbids is, that the thought or feeling should be allowed to evaporate and run to waste (as it is the nature of thought to do) in the diffuseness of the language in which it is expressed. He forbids such dilution of the sentiment by multitude of words, as would weaken the sentiment. The value of the Prayer is not to be measured at all by the amount of language employed, but by the fervour of the desire, the solemnity and urgency of the spirit within. And, in expanding this prohibition, our Blessed Lord assigns a reason for it, which draws a distinction between petitions to an earthly sovereign and those which are addressed to the Majesty of Heaven. The earthly sovereign might need to be informed of our wants; or at least he might need to have them impressed upon him. But our heavenly Father "knoweth what things we have need of, before we ask Him." He knows our wants in such a manner that they are ever present to Him, full in the review and contemplation of His infinite mind; He understands at a glance their urgency and their imminency. Prayer is not for His information at all; nor can His attention (like that of a finite mind) be distracted by other objects, so as to require to be drawn by vehemence and repeated cries to our affairs. He is never "talking," nor is He "pursuing," nor is He "in a journey," nor doth He ever sleep, and need to be awaked. Prolixity, therefore, avails nothing towards the answer of prayer. God is a Spirit. Let thy spirit touch His by faith in His love, and wisdom, and fatherly care,—by the simple affiancement which a child has in its parent,—and thou shalt draw forth from Him by a few brief words all that thou needest. This saying of our LORD is the more remarkable, because, as it stands in the Sermon on the Mount, it

forms the point of transition to the Lord's Prayer. The connexion in which that Prayer is introduced seems to point out that it is designed as a protest against diffuseness and verbiage in prayer: "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." "After *this manner therefore* pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven," &c. &c. And what a protest! How much more emphatic and significant, than if our LORD had devoted an entire discourse to expose the futility and irreverence of vain repetitions in Prayer! We defy you to point out a single word in this Divine Prayer, even down to a particle, a pronoun, or a conjunction, which could be struck out without the forfeiture of an idea and consequent detriment to the sense. The petitions of the latter section are connected by the conjunction *and*, which is not the case with those in the former part. In this slight circumstance there is a great significance, inasmuch as the petitions of the latter section flow out of one another with a marvellous sequence of thought: "Give me bread, Lord; yet with it grant me that forgiveness of sins, without which the gift of bread would merely be feeding me to condemnation; aye, Lord, and not forgiveness only for the past, but grace to be stedfast in coming temptations, and to deliver me from the evil in future." Experiment, if you will upon the first clause of this Prayer, and see what word you can afford to dispense with. Shall it be "Our?" Then your Prayer will be shorn of its Catholicity; it will become selfish; you will no longer recognise men in it as your brethren. Shall it be "Father?" God forbid! This is the most precious word of the whole. Cut it away, and you no more hear in this Divine Prayer the utterance of the Spirit of adoption. Shall it be the designation of God as "our Father *which is in heaven,*" that we may afford to part with? Thus we should lose the insinuation that the Throne of Grace must be approached in a spirit of profound reverence, and the allusion to the words of the wise king in the text, evidently here referred to by the greater than

Solomon: "GOD is *in heaven*, and thou upon earth: *therefore* let thy words be *few*."

Now it is the great praise of the Collects of the Church that they seem to have been framed upon the precept of our Blessed Lord, and upon the model which He proposed; and most candid judges will be of opinion that they approximate more closely to this model than any other prayers framed, as these are, by fallible and uninspired men.

Observe, first, that the Collects are systematic compositions. I mean by systematic that there is a unity of idea in each Collect, to which each clause contributes something,—one point, and no more, to which all the lines of thought in the short prayer converge. We have already, in a previous Chapter, exhibited the platform on which the Collects are constructed,—the invocation,—the recital of some doctrine or fact (in the Sunday Collects usually a doctrine, in those for Festivals and Saints' Days usually a fact), on which the petition is built,—then the petition, which rises upon this foundation,—then the aspiration which lends wings to the petition,—and then the conclusion. It is immediately seen how regular and orderly this framework is, and how one part of it dovetails into another. Then, again, observe the great terseness of these prayers, how no single word in them is superfluous, how each contributes its quota of meaning to the general effect, how the ideas of a single Collect might be expanded into a prayer of considerable length. These prayers are like those small fragments of gold which lie about in the gold-beater's laboratory. They are but grains in size; yet they admit of being beaten out so as to cover a large surface of religious thought.

As, however, observations of this kind are understood much better when illustrated by examples than in the abstract, let us take as a specimen the Collect for the Festival of the Epiphany;

"O God, who by the leading of a star didst mani-

fest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; Mercifully grant, that we, which know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*"

The fact recited is the fact commemorated by this Festival, that God by the leading of a star did manifest His only-begotten Son to the Gentiles. This is made the foundation of a petition that we, who know God *now by faith*, may *after this life* have the *fruition* of His glorious Godhead. Observe the nice balancing of the sense here, and how the words are set over against one another. "Now" is opposed to "after this life," and is exactly equal to "in this life." "Knowing God *by faith*" is opposed to "having the *fruition* of His glorious Godhead,"—which is equal to knowing Him by sight, "walking by sight," seeing no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face. But it may not be immediately apparent what is the thread of connexion between the fact recited and the petition based on it;—how the star-guided pilgrimage of the Magi suggests a prayer for our future full fruition of the Godhead. Beyond all doubt the thread of connexion is this; and who will deny that it is a most instructive one? To walk by faith (as we are "now" [or in this life] required to do) is to walk by starlight. To walk by sight, on the other hand, to "have the fruition of the glorious Godhead," will be to walk by sunlight. The pilgrimage of the star-led Magi is a picture or emblem of the walk of faith. The light of a starlight night is just sufficient to guide our steps by, and that is all. We cannot discriminate colours by starlight, nor see far into the horizon, nor make out more than the obscure outline of objects in our neighbourhood. Would that our Rationalists would bear in mind that, in the walk of faith, there is light enough, and only light enough, for our practical guidance, abundant light for the purpose of reaching Heaven; but that on most of the speculative questions of Religion, the exact nature of Inspiration, the necessity in reason for the Atonement, the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and of

the Eucharist, a cloud must rest for the present, which no exercise of our faculties can dissipate. We walk *now* by faith, and not by sight. And let the religionist, with whom the consolations of God are at present small,—much smaller than he could wish—remember that it is enough if, in this dim, dark condition of existence, we have certain foretastes and previous relishes of glory; the broad and genial sunlight, the cheering warmth of God's countenance and smile, in other words, the "fruition of His glorious Godhead," is reserved for "*after* this life." If God's promises (which twinkle down upon us, like the stars, in the firmament of His Word) be so cheering now, what will the fulfilment of them be? If God's love and Christ's grace are so sweet "*now*,"—if "*now*" the Christian is able to sing,

"Jesu! the very thought is sweet;  
In that dear Name all heart-joys meet;  
But sweeter than the honey far  
The glimpses of His Presence are,"

what may we not expect from the fuller revelation of this Love, this Grace, this Presence, the Power and Beauty of this Name? Lead us on, Lord, to this fuller Revelation! Let us be true (as the wise men were) to the guidance of the starlight which we enjoy, and so may we be brought out hereafter into the full sunshine of Thy countenance!

Now here, in these ideas thus suggested, is the outline of a long and profitable discourse upon that text, "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then, face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." But the outline is compressed into the smallest possible compass,—the compass of a prayer, which may be written in three lines, and recited in less than sixty seconds. And exactly the same terseness and comprehensiveness of meaning is found in other Collects. Indeed, this is not more than an average sample of the significance of these little prayers.

If it be alleged that this excessive terseness is too

good for a coarse and superficial understanding, and requires some discipline of mind to appreciate it (just as masterpieces in painting cannot be appreciated by an undisciplined eye), this no doubt is true. We entirely believe that the majority in all our congregations would sympathize more with a diffuse enlargement upon the ideas of a Collect in a long wordy prayer, than with the mere concise utterance of these ideas in the Collect itself. But this is simply because they have never been taught to study the prayers they use, or to look for any depth of meaning in them. The Liturgy is *used* in Church, until the sound of it gets familiar to their ears, but the treasures of it are never explored either by private study, or public exposition. And, further, it is to be borne in mind that whatever objection may be conceived to lie against the Collects for their over-great terseness, lies with tenfold force against the Lord's Prayer itself. The Collects may well be contented to stand or fall in such company.

It is in going through the Communion Office that we have come across the subject of this Chapter. The Collect is, and has been from the earliest introduction of this kind of prayer, a part of the Communion Office. And it should be observed that, when it appears in the Morning and Evening Prayer, it is as a memento of that highest office of the Church, of which it is a fragment. Morning and Evening Prayer are, by the theory of our Church, to be said daily throughout the year. The Communion is, by the same theory, to be reserved for Sundays and Festivals, when an Epistle and Gospel are appointed. But in our daily Service it is contrived, by the introduction of the Collect,<sup>1</sup> that

<sup>1</sup> No part of the ritual mechanism of the West is more worthy of admiration than the means by which the ordinary Office is continually linked on to the Eucharistic. The chief medium for effecting this, and indeed the only one that is of continual application, is the weekly COLLECT. . . . It is to be observed that our First Collect (at Morning and Evening Prayer) "is not merely a bond of union between our common and Eucharistic

there shall be a continual reminder of that Festival, which is the highest (and which in earliest times was the only) act of Christian Worship. To live in continual preparedness for this Festival is to live in a state of readiness for death.

The prayers of the saints are in the Book of the Revelation beautifully called "golden vials, full of odours." Yet in another passage of the same Book it is said that, when these prayers are offered "upon the golden altar, which is before the throne," "much incense" is offered with them,—a sign, surely, that in themselves they want fragrance, and cannot be a sacrifice of sweet savour unto God. We will lay to heart both these hints as regards our Collects. "Golden vials" they are, as we have seen, formed out of the precious ore (in which there is no dross) of the Word of God, fashioned by learned and devout men with an exquisite skill, and a most perfect and classical taste. Yet in themselves they are but mere empty vials; we, the worshippers, must throw into them, as we use them, the odours of devout sentiment and pious affection. They are at best only *forms* of prayer; they must be filled with the mind of prayer, before they can be justly called *prayers* of the Saints. Nor, even when filled with this mind, can these prayers be of themselves acceptable. Every thing man touches with his will, understanding, affections, he soils, and renders unworthy of God's acceptance; "all our *righteousnesses* are as filthy rags." "Much incense," therefore, needs to be offered with the prayers of all the saints at the golden altar, which is before the Throne.

Offer it for us, Thou Great High Priest! As often as we are assembled to commemorate Thy full, perfect,

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Office, but such a one as to present to us the appointed variation of that Office for the current week. . . . The Collect is endowed with a wonderful power for carrying on through the week the peculiar Eucharistic memories and work of the preceding Sunday, or of a Festival."—Freeman's Principles of Divine Service, vol. i. pp. 367, 368.



and sufficient Sacrifice, present it for us once again before the throne of God. Plead for us its unspeakable merits and virtues. And Thou shalt not, for Thou canst not, plead in vain. Our prayers, in union with Thine, shall be presented upon the golden Altar; and so united, shall not fail to find acceptance, and to draw down a blessing!

## CHAPTER III

### *OF THE EPISTLES AND GOSPELS*

“Never man spake like this man.”—JOHN vii. 46

COMMUNION with GOD involves two leading processes. The first is Prayer, in the broad sense of that term,—the access of the soul to its Maker,—its compliance with that invitation, “Draw nigh to God.” The second is GOD’s address to the soul;—the sounding out of the Holy Spirit’s voice in the depths of the human spirit; in short, the response to Prayer. It follows from this simple consideration, that in any Office professing to be a Communion Office,—an Office in the use of which the soul may have the highest intercourse with God, which it is possible to have upon earth,—there must not only be “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks,”—in a word, Prayer in its every form,—but also portions of that Inspired Volume, which is the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit to His people and to the world. A constant lesson from the Old Testament we have in the Ten Commandments; nor perhaps could any single passage of the Old Testament be selected which contains a more complete summary of the whole. For these Ten Commandments are the nucleus, round which the entire Old Dispensation forms itself—the very heart’s core of that Economy. The fuller and

brighter Revelation of the New Testament falls into two great divisions. There are the words and acts (equally significant with words) of Our Lord Himself. And there are also the writings of the Apostles, illustrating and expounding the significance of those words and acts. From each of these two sections of the New Testament we read a passage (varying it every Sunday) in the Communion Service. The passage from the first section is called the Holy Gospel. That from the second is called the Epistle, and formerly went by the name of "the Apostle." It is almost always an extract from the writings of some Apostle; though there is occasionally substituted for this an extract from the writings of the Prophets, who were the Apostles of the Old Dispensation.

We will first say something of the relation to one another of these two passages of the New Testament, and then of the principles on which the selection has been made.

I. Our Church, while recognising both Epistle and Gospel as equally parts of God's inspired Word, gives the post of honour to the Gospel. It is called, in announcing it, the *Holy* Gospel; whereas the Epistle is simply called the Epistle. The people are seated while the Epistle is read, but are directed to stand up on the announcement of the Gospel. Moreover, a custom has been very generally retained by tradition, which was actually ordered in the Rubric of the first Prayer Book of 1549, but the order dropped (one knows not why) in that of 1552, of singing between the announcement and the passage itself this short anthem, "Glory be to Thee, O Lord?" The reading of the Gospel has been attended from the earliest ages of the Church with these and other marks of reverence and honour; and a little thought will give us an insight into the significance of this arrangement.

The general explanation, no doubt, is, that higher honour should be done to the words of the Master, who is Christ, than to those of His servants, the Apostles. This consideration, however, seems to many

minds to lose its force, when it is taken into account that the writings of the Apostles were inspired by the Holy Ghost, and were in fact the utterances of the Spirit within them. The fact of Inspiration seems to them to make any difference vanish, which might be conceived to exist in favour of the words of Christ, or indeed in favour of the New Testament above the Old. And thus some persons habitually regard the whole Bible,—Old Testament as well as New,—as being entirely on a level in point of interest, importance, and value ;—I mean, their theory is so to regard it, although when the theory is pushed to its legitimate consequences,—when, for example, they are required to accept the proposition, that a genealogy in the Book of Chronicles is of the same interest and importance as the narrative of the Death of the Christ,—they would find it impossible to maintain their theory. Now while we fully and entirely concede that “*all* Scripture is given by Inspiration of God,”—that every sentence of it has an object and a significance of its own (though it may not be always apparent to us what that object and significance may be)—and moreover that there is a living unity in the whole Volume, in virtue of which we justly class together the various compositions in it, and call the whole of them by one name, “The Bible ;” we cannot perceive it to be a consequence from these premises that every part of the Bible should be of equal weight and importance. The human body is entirely pervaded by the soul, which is the life thereof ; the extremities have life in them, as well as the great vessels ; and even those parts of the frame which are not endowed with sensibility (like the hair and the nails), even these, so long as animal life is in the body, have the principle of vegetable life abiding in them, and show that they have it by their growth. Moreover, every organ and member of the body has its function ; no part of it has Nature made in vain, though it be true indeed that there are certain parts, the functions of which have not as yet been made out by the science of Anatomy. An eyelash, though so slight a thing,

has a most important office ; and the great number of parts, whose functions are well ascertained, makes it in the highest degree improbable that there should be any part *without* a function. Again ; the unity of the body is a well-known and generally admitted fact, which has been made the basis of many illustrations, both in sacred and profane literature.

But while all this is admitted, it cannot be inferred hence that all parts of the body are of equal moment,—that there is as much vitality in the hair as in the veins, or that an operation upon the teeth would be as critical and dangerous as the excision of the pound of flesh, which the Jew proposed to take from the region of the merchant's heart. Now apply this illustration to the matter in hand. The Bible is pervaded by the Spirit of God in its every part. We dare not say of a single text, "The Spirit of God is absent here." We dare not say of a single text, "This text has no use." Even where we may be ignorant what use it has, the text may serve the purpose (a very useful one surely) of humbling us and teaching us our own ignorance. The Bible, moreover, is one living, organized whole. Considering the immense variety of compositions in it,—their difference in style, in date, in occasion, in authorship,—there is a marvellous harmony in its different parts, as is attested by the great body of marginal references in any Chapter to remote books. We may admit all this decidedly, and yet fall very far short of saying that one part of the Bible is as precious to us as another, or that we would as soon part with the history of Our Lord's Passion, as with St. Paul's message to Timothy to bring his cloak and his parchments.

At present, however, we make these general remarks with a particular reference to the Epistles and Gospels. The fullest recognition of the inspiration of the holy Apostles, and of their inspiration unto infallibility, does not force us to put their writings on a level with their Master's sayings. The words of Him who is the Word are assuredly the highest words ever spoken. "Never man spake like this man." No words are so

simple, so profound, so comprehensive, no words have such a fulness and richness of spiritual meaning, as those of Jesus Christ recorded in the Gospels. In what does the difference between them and the words of the Apostles principally consist? In this, I believe; that each Apostle is appointed, in reference no doubt to his own habit of mind and peculiar character, to bring out one side of Truth; whereas the words of Christ touch Truth on all sides, present no side of it to the momentary exclusion or obscuration of another. St. Paul is the advocate of free Grace; St. James of the necessity of holy living. The statements of both are infallibly true, and therefore must be (not perhaps by our poor, clumsy logic, but) to the highest reason perfectly reconcilable. Still they take different sides, as all mere human writers (even though inspired) must do. St. John's theology is tinctured with one leading sentiment, Love, and with one leading instinct, insight into profound Truth; he cannot write with the ardour of St. Paul; he must write (in conformity with his own temperament) more calmly, more soothingly, more contemplatively.—But now, if you attempt to characterise Our Lord's words by any one doctrine, or by any one sentiment or habit of thought, or by any one feature of natural character, you feel at once that you fail, and that your description is inadequate. It is simple, pure, crystalline truth that He speaks, uncoloured by the medium of any particular prepossession. He preaches faith; “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that *whosoever believeth in Him* should not perish, but have eternal life.” He preaches works; “All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they *that have done good*, unto the resurrection of life; and they *that have done evil*, unto the resurrection of damnation.” He preaches love; “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from *your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*” He preaches heaven; “There is joy *in the presence of the angels of God* over one

sinner that repenteth." "I say unto you, that in *heaven* their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven." He preaches hell; "It is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be *cast into hell*, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." He is continually harping on the Fatherhood of God, the most universal (if I may so say) and comprehensive of the doctrines of Grace, in the light of which all differences between man and man vanish;—the most fundamental, too,—that which not only embraces, but accounts for and explains, all others.

The voices of His Apostles are but single parts; His voice is the full harmony which comprises all the parts,—which sums up all truths of God. Their doctrines are the component colours; His the sunlight, which embraces in itself all colours. And therefore it is well and wisely ordered that, in the most solemn Service of the Church, a higher honour should be put upon His sayings than upon theirs, and that, as of old "He sent them two and two before His face into every city and place whither He Himself would come," so now the reading of their writings should prepare the mind for the record of His most significant acts, and for the reception of those words of His, which, according to His own testimony, "are spirit and are life."

II. We must now say a word upon the principles on which the Epistles and Gospels have been selected.

Whatever judgment may be formed as to the selection of the Sunday Lessons (and I do not intimate, in so speaking, that even this selection cannot be justified), I think it will be agreed, on all hands, that the Epistles and Gospels are very choice passages of the New Testament, such as we should wish most frequently to recur to, not only for the edification to be derived from them, but for their own intrinsic beauty. Is there any New Testament passage of great interest and importance which is not included in these selections, unless indeed,

like the 11th of St. John, or the 15th of 1st Corinthians, it is somewhat too long for an extract, and will not easily admit of abridgment? So that we may fairly call these passages the Beauties of the New Testament, justifying that term, if its application to Sacred Literature should seem strange at first, by the considerations which have been just advanced.

These passages, except in Holy Week, where the object is to bring before our minds every detail of our LORD'S Passion, without any abridgment, are all very short. It is part of the principle of the compilation that they should be so. Our Church, by its four daily Lessons on the one hand, and its Epistles and Gospels on the other, would indicate to us that there are two methods of reading Holy Scripture which should be combined in our practice,—a cursory reading, which carries us with bare attention through large tracts of it, and a slow reading, which dwells thoughtfully upon particular texts. Now each member of the Church, if so disposed, could profitably avail himself of the last, as well as the first, of these intimations. Dividing the ordinary Epistle and Gospel into six equal portions, we shall get perhaps an average of three verses for meditation on each day of the week. Let these verses be glanced over three or four times in the morning until they are fixed in the memory. Let us ask ourselves what lessons can be extracted from them, and what prayers can be founded upon them. Let us revert to them during the day, whenever our thoughts are at leisure, and turn them over and over in our minds, so as to examine them on all sides. Thus we shall acquaint ourselves with the Psalmist's specific against sin,—a specific used, we are told, and used, doubtless, with good effect, by the Blessed Virgin Mary: "Thy words have I hid within my heart, that I should not sin against Thee;" "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."

Descending rather more to particulars, we find that there are two great divisions of the Christian Year,—from Advent to Trinity Sunday, and from Trinity

Sunday to Advent ; and that the Epistles and Gospels for the former period set forth chiefly the mysteries of Our Lord's career, His Incarnation, Nativity, Epiphany, Baptism, Fasting, Miracles, Resurrection, Ascension, Mission of the Spirit, Presence in His Church, and the doctrines founded on, or connected with, these historical facts ; whereas those for the latter period rather instruct us how to lead our lives after Christ's Example, and to build upon the foundation of holy doctrine the superstructure of a holy life. Thus the doctrinal and practical parts of the New Testament are brought before us in succession, and a protest is made against that wretched narrowness of mind, so common among religionists, which gives an exclusive prominence to one class of favourite texts, and throws into the shade all which present another aspect of the Truth. The Epistles and Gospels are so contrived as to teach us the important lesson that we should keep our minds in a just equilibrium between the various testimonies of God's Holy Word, attaching to each of them their due weight, and looking each of them by turns full in the face.

The appropriateness of these passages to the particular seasons, for which they are appointed, will be best seen by an example. And the example shall be taken, as it was in the case of the Collect, from the Epiphany season. By the word Epiphany is meant the Manifestation of Christ. Now, see how this one thought of the Manifestation of the Saviour pervades all the Gospels for this season. Christ is manifested in infancy to the Wise Men of the East,—manifested by the guidance of a star, external to Himself,—for an infant cannot put forth any energies, or exhibit in any form the powers which may be latent in it. 'This is the Gospel for the Festival itself. But when the infant becomes a child, he then can manifest the dawning powers of intelligence and piety. The Manifestation of extraordinary powers of this kind, while He was yet a boy of twelve years old, is the subject of the Gospel for the first Sunday. The earliest Manifestation of *miraculous* power, resident in the Saviour, when at the wedding



in Cana He turned the water into wine, is the subject of the Gospel on the second Sunday. The Manifestations of miraculous power *over disease* by a touch and by a word, follow in the Gospel for the third Sunday. In that for the fourth, we read of similar Manifestations ; first, *over inanimate Nature* in the winds and the waves ; secondly, *over evil spirits* in the two possessed with devils ; and thirdly, *over the brute creation* in the swine.—Hitherto, we have had the Manifestation of the *Personal Christ*,—a Manifestation, therefore, of unmixed good. But now in the Manifestation of the *mystical Christ*,—of Christ in His Church,—we come across a different scene. The Parable of the Tares, sown amongst the good seed, forms the Gospel for the fifth Sunday ; warning us that in the visible Church we must be prepared for much evil alongside of the good, and that not until the end of all things can this evil be eradicated. The Gospel for the sixth (or closing) Sunday introduces us to the period of this final eradication. The last Manifestation of Christ—the Manifestation which alone of all Manifestations will leave no room for doubt or scepticism—will be that of the Second Advent, of which here we read, when “all the tribes of the earth shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Now when attention is called to the orderly sequence of these various passages of Scripture, it is at once seen that there is a design in compiling them. They have not been chosen hastily or arbitrarily ; there has been the exercise of thought in selecting them, and great care taken to adapt them to the occasion. And this is one specimen, out of many, which leads us to believe that the more we look into the liturgical arrangements of our Church, the more significance we shall see in them, and the stronger will be our conviction that scarcely any of them (if any) were made at haphazard ; that in all there is some trace of the thoughtful wisdom and piety which seeks not to startle, but to edify.

In the application of our subject, let us remark that the history of Christ must be mystically repeated in

the heart of the individual Christian. Is there in progress within us a manifestation of His Love, and Power, and Wisdom, which is ever dawning more and more, from the first glimmer of conviction, to the perfect day of a settled and established faith? Has our faithfulness to religious impressions, like the faithfulness of the Magi to the guidance of the star, brought us to the feet of the Redeemer, there to do our spiritual homage? Are we discovering more and more of the unsearchable riches of Christ, the treasures of wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, which are in Him laid up? If there be still alive within our corrupt hearts desperate evil, is the true light gaining ground upon the darkness, and making it manifest? Is the good seed encroaching upon the territory of the tares, although for the present tares there are and must be? An affirmative answer to these questions is the one thing which can give us comfort and good hope through grace, in the prospect of that final Manifestation of Our Lord, which must be made to all, when He who cometh shall come, and "every eye shall see Him."

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## CHAPTER IV

### *OF THE NICENE CREED*

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:  
 God was manifest in the flesh,  
 Justified in the Spirit,  
 Seen of angels,  
 Preached unto the Gentiles,  
 Believed on in the world,  
 Received up into glory."—I TIM. iii. 16

THE Nicene Creed occupies in the Communion Service a place analogous to that which the Apostles' Creed holds in the Morning and Evening Prayer. In

both cases the Creed is introduced after the reading of Holy Scripture : in the Communion Service immediately after ; in the Morning and Evening Prayer with the interposition of a Canticle or Psalm. This position of the Creed is significant. "Faith," says the Apostle, "cometh by hearing ; and hearing by the Word of GOD." The Word of GOD we have just heard in the Lessons, or in the Epistle and Gospel. And having heard it, we profess that faith, which is engendered by it,—the cordial belief of those articles which are contained in it, and which are its sum and substance. Christ has been just announced to us in the Gospel ; some of His gracious acts have been recited in our hearing ; some of His blessed words have fallen on our ears ; and if our hearts have been in a right state while listening, the Lord has seemed to challenge us with the question which He addressed to the blind man, whom He had restored, "Dost thou believe on the Son of GOD?" "Thou hast both heard of Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." And, accordingly, we at once reply to the challenge, "Lord, I believe," by repeating one of those formularies of Faith, which in ancient times was a watchword whereby the disciples of Christ recognised one another, and were distinguished from the unbelieving world.

To this we may add that the Nicene Creed has a peculiar appropriateness in the Office of the Communion. At each Communion we renew in our own persons the vow that was made for us at our Baptism. Now part of this vow was that we should "believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith." A profession of the Christian Faith, then, is most suitable and appropriate, whenever we approach the Lord's Table. In every right approach such a profession of Faith must be *implied* ; and in *our* method of approach it is *expressed*. And the particular formulary, which we employ on this occasion, is a little more detailed and explicit than that employed at Baptism. The Nicene Creed is fuller than the Apostles' ; the outline of the Confession is more filled in. He who has been

confirmed and admitted to Communion is supposed now to have a larger insight into Christian Truth than he who has merely received Baptism. He is presumed to have greater intelligence, and clearer apprehensions. And this greater intelligence is expressed in a fuller formulary of Faith.

But there is an antagonistic feature about Creeds,—and especially about the Creed in this position,—which we must not omit to notice. We are now, it must be remembered, approaching the highest mystery of our Religion,—the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. Now just as in the ancient heathen forms of religion the Priest fenced the mysteries from unhallowed intrusion by exclaiming, “Begone, ye profane;” so in the celebration of the spiritual Sacrifice of the Gospel it is intimated in a very significant way that the holy things of the Church are not for dogs, nor her pearls for swine,—that the profane must hold aloof. But who are the profane, in the estimate of the Lord of the Church? Are they those who are harassed by the charges of an accusing conscience? Ah, no! if only such have renounced their sins, and earnestly sought remission of them. Zacchæus is not profane. The “woman which was a sinner” is not profane. The penitent robber is not profane. The profaneness which excludes from pardon is not the profaneness of past sin, but that of present unbelief. Where there is the faith, founded upon the Word of God, which purifies the heart, there is no profaneness. Can you believe, notwithstanding all your falls, in the Father’s boundless love, in the Son’s atoning grace, and in the freely proffered help of the Holy Ghost? Then draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. Nothing but unbelief need bar thine approach. Those only who misbelieve, or who cannot re-echo the Creed from the depths of a penitent and sincere heart, are warned away.

Again, there is something interesting and observable in the middle position of the Creed between the Sermon which succeeds and the Scripture which goes

before it. The Creed is a human and uninspired formulary of doctrine. We "thoroughly receive and believe it" (in the language of our eighth Article), "because it may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture." But, though uninspired, it has the greatest sanction which uninspired Theology can have. It is not an exposition of Christian Doctrine by a single divine, however learned, able, and pious. The former part of it was drawn up at the first General Council (that of Nicæa); and at the second, that of Constantinople, it received the addition of those articles which succeed the words, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." These concluding clauses were already found in Creeds of a date earlier than the Nicene, and only omitted by the Nicene Bishops, as not involving any point then controverted. Now, this to a thoughtful and reverent mind is the greatest sanction, short of inspiration, which any such document can have. For the six first General Councils were held before the unhappy rupture which divided Eastern and Western Christendom, and thus represented (what no subsequent Council ever has represented) the mind of the entire Church of Christ throughout the world. Three hundred Bishops at least (the number usually assigned is three hundred and eighteen) came together to the first of them from all parts of the Empire. "Eusebius, himself an eye-witness" (I quote from a modern work, which delineates with admirable picturesqueness), "as he enumerates the various characters, from various countries, of various age and position, thus collected, compares the scene either with the diverse nations assembled at Pentecost, or with a garland of flowers gathered in season, of all manner of colours, or with a mystic dance, in which every actor performs a part of his own, to complete a sacred ceremony." There were Bishops from France and Spain, and Bishops from Syria and Persia; there was Theophilus the Goth from the far North, his light complexion and fair hair contrasting strangely with the tawny features of the Egyptian and Coptic deputies. There were scholars

in that assembly, and there were ascetics. There were young deacons in attendance upon their Bishops, whose faith had been hitherto unproved by trial, and there were Bishops who had passed through the fiery ordeal of the last and worst persecution, and had lost one eye or one leg because they would not renounce the faith of the Crucified.—The occasion must be by all admitted to have been of sufficient importance to warrant a General Council; for the doctrine controverted was nothing less than the Divinity of Christ, and His Co-eternity with the Father, the necessary condition of His Divinity. The Church was impartially represented; for Arius himself, and the Bishops of his School of Theology, were present (though in a minority), no less than the champions of the Orthodox party.—What the standard of appeal in deciding the question was, may be gathered from the circumstance that in the middle of the Council-chamber was placed on a seat or throne a copy of the holy Gospels, and from the well-ascertained fact that every clause of the Nicene Creed is to be found in other Creeds, or authentic records, antecedent to the Council. Thus the Nicene Fathers did not presume to add to the Faith derived from Holy Scripture, but simply re-affirmed it, as it had been hitherto received by the Church.—So that the Nicene Council, and indeed the Œcumenical Councils generally, want nothing *in reason* to make their sentences worthy of all veneration; they were impartially constituted tribunals, summoned on adequate occasions, and referring to a right standard of appeal. But is it thought that *Scriptural* sanction would make them more venerable still? Such councils have Scriptural sanction to the utmost extent that any reasonable person can desire. They stand on the sure basis of the Apostolical Council held at Jerusalem, as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts. The question agitated and determined in that Council was whether the Gentile converts were bound to the observance of circumcision and the whole Mosaic ritual. “The Apostles and Elders,” we are told, “came to-

gether for to consider of this matter;" and the sentence of the Council is announced in this peculiarly solemn formulary; "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." It is observable how even in this Council the only two speakers whose speeches are recorded appeal to previous Revelation, St. Peter alluding to the vision which had led to his connexion with Cornelius, and St. James referring to and quoting the Book of the Prophet Amos in proof of his position. And it is more than observable,—it is a point full of significance and instruction,—that a Council, under such circumstances, should have been thought necessary. The Apostles, the daily associates of our Blessed Lord and Saviour, who had received the Truth from His own lips, were yet alive. They were men inspired unto infallibility. They were men on whom the Holy Ghost had descended at Pentecost, in the shape of fiery tongues, endowing them with miraculous gifts in attestation of their mission. Was not each of them by himself a living oracle, perfectly qualified to decide such a question? Why must they come together "to consider of a matter," which each was competent to resolve? Yet we cannot for a moment suppose that they acted without Divine direction in taking this step. The truth no doubt is that our LORD wished to give the greatest possible sanction to the united acts of His Church as a Body—the greatest weight to His own covenanted promise; "Where two or three are gathered in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." Even when inspired men were alive, each member of the Church was only a member; the Body of Christ was not, in the absence of the other members. How much more, then, would this gathering together of the representatives of the Church, this discussion and deliberation, be necessary, when Inspiration unto infallibility was withdrawn, and the Christian Community was left to the common aids and assistances of the Holy Spirit! And if schisms, and divisions, and the narrowness of a wretched party spirit, have now made it impossible to call together a Council truly

oecumenical, and, even if it were possible, the central authority, whose summons all parts of the Christian world would obey, is wanting; and if thus Divine Providence puts a bar upon such a settlement of important controversies in modern times; surely this is no reason why we should undervalue the sentences of those six Councils, which in their day truly and fairly represented the mind of the whole Church, and were adequately constituted. The Nicene Creed records the verdict of the two first of those Councils, and is therefore to be regarded with a veneration second only to that with which we regard the inspired Word of God. It is an exposition of the most important points in that Word, coming from the mind of the Holy Catholic Church throughout the world.—This exposition is in the Communion Service followed by another of a more discursive and diffuse character, and of much lower authority, called the Sermon. This Sermon is an explanation and enforcement of God's Word by a single teacher, ordained, indeed, and so deriving his commission through a long succession of links from the Apostles; but still only able to present the view taken by his own individual mind, and subject always to correction not only from Holy Scripture, but from the sentences of the General Councils. Thus we have in the Epistle and Gospel the Holy Scripture itself, which is immediately followed by its conciliary exposition in the Creed, and by its pastoral exposition in the Sermon.

It has been incidentally observed in the present Chapter that several formularies of Faith existed in the Church before the Nicene Council. The language in which these formularies expressed the Truth fluctuated; some are more expanded, some concise; but in substance all of them are much the same. And there can be no doubt that this substance, as distinct from the particular expressions, came down from the Apostles themselves. We find distinct traces of a Creed in their writings. St. Paul exhorts Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound words, which he had heard of



him, in faith and love," "and to keep that which was committed to his trust;" in both which passages it is highly probable that some formulary of faith, of the nature of a Creed, is referred to. Under the then circumstances of the Church, when parts of the New Testament did not exist, and the copies of those which did exist were very rare, and multiplied with difficulty, some summary of the teaching of inspired men, brief, comprehensive, and portable to the memory, must have been urgently in request. And it is probable that St. Paul quotes a fragment of such a summary, when in terms which have an almost rhythmical cadence in the original, and run in parallel clauses, he thus enunciates the mystery of godliness,—the Truth, of which the Church is the pillar and ground; "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

So that not only the synods which framed for us our Creeds, but the Creeds themselves so framed, may appeal to Holy Scripture for their earliest warrants.

Three points in the English version of the Nicene Creed, which are very generally misunderstood, demand a brief notice here. The first is, that the word "of" in the expression, "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God," is not expressive of the superlative degree (as we might call the Bible "the Book of books," or God "the King of kings," meaning the best book, the highest of kings), but is exactly equal to "from;" and conveys the doctrine that the Second Person of the Godhead (to use the Apostle's language) is the "brightness of" the Father's "glory," standing in the same relation to Him as the light does to the sun. This sense is conveyed in reading by slightly emphasizing the "of;"—"God *of* God," "Light *of* Light."

The second is, that the words "By whom all things were made" have reference, not to the immediately foregoing antecedent, "the Father," but to the Son, and are merely an echo of St. John's inspired statement; "All things were made by Him" (the Word);

“and without Him was not any thing made that was made.”

The third is, that where the Holy Ghost is called “the Lord and Giver of life,” the word “life” is not to be understood as dependent upon “Lord,” but merely upon the preceding word “Giver.” In the original the words run thus, without any conjunction; “I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the life-giving Spirit.” These words (with all that succeed them) were added to the Creed at the first Council of Constantinople, and their design was to condemn in the most emphatic way the heresy of Macedonius, who taught that the Holy Ghost was a creature, and denied His separate personality. In opposition to these heretics, and in exact conformity with the language of St. Paul, “Now the Lord is that Spirit,” the Council protested that the Holy Ghost “is the Lord, the Life-giver.” But the force of their protest is lost, or at least much weakened, if in the usual thoughtless and slovenly mode of recitation the two terms are fused together and read without any pause,—“the Lord and Giver of life.” The insertion of a comma in the Prayer Book after the word “Lord” would vindicate the original sense, and point out the true method of conveying it,—“the Lord, and Giver of life.”

Passing from these (not unimportant) critical remarks to matters of a more practical bearing, we observe that the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds, unlike other parts of Public Service, are couched in the first person singular,—“I believe.” This is the more remarkable, as it is a variation from the original, which, being the decision of a Council, ran thus; “We believe.” The “I” teaches us a valuable lesson. Prayer is a matter in which we may materially help one another; in which we are always, even in the privacy of our closets, to bear on our hearts the wants and wishes of our brethren, no less than our own. Therefore, when we pray in the form which the Lord Himself has given us, we say not “*My* Father,” but “*Our* Father;” not “Give *me*” and “forgive *me*,”

but "Give us" and "forgive us." But belief is a matter purely personal. We must believe each man for himself in the depths of his own spirit. The faith of the Church to which we belong will not save us, nor even comfort us in our spiritual distresses;—only a laying hold of Christ in the inner man of the heart can do that; and therefore we say, "I believe in one God." What an intimation have we here (though conveyed in an indirect way) that the Church intends us to profess, and inculcates upon us, not a mere speculative and historical belief,—not the bare conviction that these things happened; but a lively faith, influential upon the character and conduct. You are to recite the Creed, not as one of a multitude of professing believers, but as one whose heart has been reached, and the springs of whose character have been touched, by the glorious truths to which you give utterance. You are to recite it, not as a nominal, but as a real Christian. You come out of the crowd, when you repeat it, and profess that you personally, you individually, you by the working of your own mind, have found comfort, peace, satisfaction for every felt need and instinct of the soul, in this glorious old watchword, which has come down to us hallowed by so many associations, and for their faithful adherence to which martyrs have not hesitated to shed their blood.

But the highest aspect of the Christian Creeds has yet to be noticed. They are, then, and have always been accounted, not merely a bulwark against the inroads of heresy, not merely a confession of faith, not merely a watchword for believers, but also a Hymn of Praise. In the ancient offices, even the Athanasian Creed, which is the most sternly dogmatic of the three, is called, from what was considered to be its prevailing character, "The Psalm *Quicumque vult*;" and being reckoned as a Psalm it was sung antiphonally, as the Psalms are. And it is a curious fact that the Apostles' Creed in the Morning Prayer, and the Nicene Creed in the Communion Office, are directed to be "sung or said" (not, as the phrase commonly is, "said or sung"), as if the preference were given to singing. This may be an

accident; but whether it be so or not, we shall not err in regarding the Creeds as a burst of praise, and the Nicene Creed as the first burst of praise in that Service, which is throughout a Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving. Divided as it is into three Paragraphs, corresponding to the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, it is only the Doxology expanded. And it should be said therefore in a spirit attuned to praise, in a jubilant spirit, quickened by the triumphs of redeeming Love to speak aloud the Redeemer's glory. Those who love to exalt the Name of Christ,—those who feel (as what true Christian does not feel?) that it is His Divinity which gives efficacy to His Atonement, and lends such peculiar lustre to the whole scheme of Redemption,—will not elsewhere find terms better suited to express their sentiments than those on which we have commented, “God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made.” And there is a grandeur, too, in that confession of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, which will approve itself specially to those who, being deeply conscious of the weakness and sinfulness of their own nature, know that no strength short of GOD's will suffice to give them the victory; “I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets.”

Let it be our aim, then, to join in this part of the Divine Office in a spirit of holy exultation. Such a spirit will be found to have a reflex action upon our own minds of the most beneficial character. It will strengthen our Christian principle, fortify us against temptation, enable us to cope more successfully with besetting sins. For it is not with the palsied hands of despondency that we can hope to achieve any spiritual enterprise, nor with the tottering feet of a timid, doubting, hesitating faith that we can hope to walk bravely and firmly in the ways of the Lord. “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.” “The joy of the Lord is your strength.”

## NOTE ON THE ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

It was suggested to the author by some, who heard the substance of this Chapter delivered as a Sermon, that the article, "Begotten of the Father *before all worlds*," should receive some explanation, as being a stumbling-block to many. It can be no stumbling-block to any who have read Bishop Pearson's elaborate and masterly disquisition on the Eternal Generation of the Son, in which he shows that Our Lord is the Son of God not only in respect of His Birth of the Virgin, not only in respect of His Birth from the Grave (Resurrection), not only in respect of His Inheritance of all things, but also in respect of the communication (from all eternity) of the Divine Essence from the Father, which is far more truly and properly a generation than any natural generation of the creature.

The Scriptural texts which show this are:—

"God sent His Only-Begotten Son into the world."—John iv. 9.

(He was the Son before He was sent.)

"God sent forth His Son, made of a woman."—Gal. iv. 4.

(He was the Son before He was born of a woman.)

"The Firstborn of every creature" (or, as it might be rendered, "Begotten prior to every creature").—Col. i. 17.

"The Only-Begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father" (evidently referring to Our Lord's position in the Godhead, not to His Birth in Time).—John i. 18.

Bishop Pearson's argument is thus admirably summed up by Bishop Browne in his exposition of the Second Article:—

"Now the communication of the nature of God, thus made by the Father to the Son, may be called a proper generation. Nay, it is more proper than any earthly generation. For, in human generation, the son indeed derives his nature from his father, but it is in a manner according with the imperfection of humanity. Man's generation is in time, and, as connected with that which is material, results, in part at least, from that property of matter called divisibility. The son, too, in human beings, when derived from the father, becomes separated from him.

"But this is not so with God. God's eternal perfections He, from all eternity, communicated to His Son. 'So also the Divine essence, being by reason of its simplicity not subject to division, and in respect of its infinity incapable of multiplication, is so communicated as not to be multiplied; insomuch that he which proceedeth by that communication, hath not only the same nature, but is also the same God. The Father God, and the Word God; Abraham man, and Isaac man: but Abraham one

man, Isaac another man ; not so the Father one God, and the Word another, but the Father and the Word both the same God. Since then the propriety of generation is founded in the essential similitude of the son unto the father, by reason of the same nature which he receiveth from him ; since the full perfect nature of God is communicated unto the Word, and that more intimately and with a greater unity or identity than can be found in human generations : it followeth that this communication of the Divine nature is the proper generation by which Christ is, and is called, the true and proper Son of God.'"—Pp. 66, 67, of the Fifth Edition.

The point proved by the above texts, and learnedly expounded in the above extract, may seem at first of a subtle and abstract nature, such as has a tendency to perplex rather than edify. But see how important a bearing dogma has upon practice ! We should be robbed of a full half of our consolation, if we were not persuaded that Our Lord from all eternity stood towards God in the relation of the Only-Begotten. What a pang does it cost a parent to part with an only son,—to part with him to danger, sufferings and death ! Yet parents are found, who in a noble cause will make even this sacrifice, though it rends their hearts asunder. GOD made this sacrifice for the salvation of souls. How intensely must He have loved us, even while we were yet sinners, to tear His Only Son from His Bosom, and send Him down into the pit of our ruin, to agonize and bleed for every man !

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## CHAPTER V

### *OF THE SERMON OR INSTRUCTION*

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ . . . Preach the word.”—2 TIM. iv. 1, 2

THE position which the Sermon has always held in the Communion Office sufficiently declares its nature. It follows after the Word of God, and after the authoritative conciliary exposition of the Word of God. It is plainly meant, then, to be a commentary upon, or exposition of that Word,—wanting of course now-a-days the sanction of Inspiration, wanting even the sanction of the authority of the Universal Church ;

but still delivered under the express commissiōn of Christ, when He gave this parting charge to His disciples; "Go ye, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: *teaching them to observe* all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The Sermon is (or ought to be) an instruction of baptized persons in all things which Christ commanded, none of those things being omitted, all of them finding a place there in turn. As such, it has the Lord's own warrant, and to that warrant, not to the eloquence or ingenuity of its composition, all its spiritual efficacy is due.

Now here is opened up at the outset a line of thought on the subject before us, which may profitably guard us against contrary errors. The Sermon is an exposition of Holy Scripture. On the one hand, it has no independent ground of its own to stand upon. On the other, it is not, and is not designed to be, Scripture itself. An oration not suggested by, or turning upon, the Word of God,—not professing to illustrate its doctrines or enforce its precepts,—however able it might be, and however pious and well-intentioned, would not be a sermon. Just in proportion as an address from the pulpit takes up an independent line of thought, not holding of Scripture, in that proportion it is not a sermon. But, on the other hand, a sermon is not (as some seem to think it, who cherish a very just horror of the opposite extreme) a cento of texts of Scripture, tacked together with no other connexion than such as a Concordance, or a Bible with marginal references, might furnish. There must be a play of the preacher's mind upon Scripture to constitute a sermon. It is to be Scripture, not in its letter and abstract form, but as it presents itself to an ordinary human mind, projected upon it for the purpose of drawing out its lessons. The preacher stands in much the same relation to Scripture as a musician does to the instrument on which he plays. Every conceivable melody is wrapped up in those notes, which lie under the musician's hand. Apart from the notes, there can be no melody. Yet

the musician has an important part to play in combining the notes. If he were merely to strike a number of them at random, there would be no melody. In like manner the preacher must be a composer from materials supplied to him. All his materials are found in Scripture; there are none beside. But the arrangement of these, the illustration of one by another, the form in which they shall be presented, must be the work of the preacher's mind.

This is a point of great importance; and we must dwell upon it a little more, and trace out some of its bearings. What then is the real substance of the Ordinance (for such it is) of Preaching, as distinct from its form, which is variable, and which circumstances may modify? The substance is this, that God uses fallible and sinful man to teach man. It was of course open to Him to adopt other methods of proceeding; but this is the method which, no doubt on the wisest and best grounds, He preferred. He might send periodically angels from heaven to instruct us in the way of life. Such an arrangement might not seem to be without its advantages. The great message would always be truly, and purely, and fully delivered; it would never be liable to misrepresentation or perversion. Yet as it was not God's purpose to redeem, so neither is it His purpose to instruct us, by the ministry of angels. And thus much, at all events, we may see of the wisdom of this purpose, that angels having made no experiment of our temptations, and our whole mode of life and thought being of necessity entirely foreign to those among whom sin and sorrow are unknown, they could in no way do aught but deliver their bare message,—they would not possess that key to the heart, which nothing short of a common experience can give. Why is it that European missionaries to the distant heathen see very little fruit of their labours, in comparison of converts from among the natives themselves, who have been instructed and ordained? The reason is obvious. A European has not the key to a Brahman's habits of thought, to a



Brahman's associations and sentiments, which a Brahman himself has. Yet the European and the Brahman have a common nature; and if you dug deep beneath the incrustations of outward circumstance and mere intellectual conformation, you would find the same precious ore of human affections in the heart of both. But suppose for a moment the nature of the two *not* to be fundamentally the same; how, in that case, would the incapacity of the one to be the teacher and guide of the other be enhanced! The European and the Brahman, if they do not reason in the same method, can at least understand one another's fears, and hopes, and desires; but supposing the difference of their nature prevented their doing this, how little in that case is one of them suited to be the guide of the other in those matters of religion, which touch very closely the conduct and the trials of every-day life. You might give a man a perfect theoretical knowledge of navigation; but if he had never been on board a vessel himself, he would hardly make a very safe pilot. And the holy angels, though they may stand on the shore of human life, and watch us with a divine commiseration as we toil in rowing, have never embarked themselves on the waves of this troublesome world.

But while sending to instruct us those of like passions with ourselves, God might doubtless have confined Himself, had He so pleased, to *inspired* men—men secured from error by virtue of their inspiration. And without continuing a succession of such men in the Church, He might (as He has done) have caused their writings to be preserved and collected into one Volume, and might have given us no other guidance than that of this Book of Truth. But the point to which we now call attention is, that it has pleased Him to indicate for us, in this very Book of Truth, another means of guidance. Neither Timothy nor Titus were inspired men; yet they are exhorted to "give attendance to exhortation and doctrine;" "to command and teach" certain truths which they had received from the Apostles; "to divide rightly the

word of truth ;” to “preach the word ;” to “reprove, rebuke, exhort ;” to “speak the things which become sound doctrine ;” “to affirm constantly” certain faithful sayings. And the things which they have heard from the Apostle they are “to commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also ;” they are “to ordain bishops, who shall be apt to teach,” and “able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” It is clear from the whole tenor of these passages that, over and above the Holy Scriptures, a living Ministry of the Word is provided, to continue for ever in the Church of Christ. But it is not equally clear what the grounds of this arrangement are, nor how easily by our formality and want of reflection we may nullify the provision.

Why, it may be reasonably asked, was not the whole weight of the instruction of Christendom rested on the Scriptures of truth? Why must commissioned men have any share in it? The Scriptures are infallible; whereas uninspired ministers are not only fallible, but have often actually fouled the clear well of Scriptural truth with the turbid sentiment of their own perverse interpretations. Would it not have shut up one great avenue of error, if Christ had given no commission of teaching or preaching except to His inspired Apostles, and had simply made ordinary ministers chargeable with the ministration of the Sacraments, and the conduct of public worship? Nay; but God will risk much,—much of error, much of infirmity, much of misrepresentation,—if so be He may secure a warm, living, sympathetic, experimental delivery of His message. Even Inspiration places too great a gulf between the inspired teacher and those whom he is set to instruct; the teacher will be of more help to the scholar in some respects (not indeed as an infallible oracle, but as a counsellor in actual trials and emergencies), if both have only the same ordinary assistances of the Holy Spirit, and if both live contemporaneously, in the same outward condition, and in the same stage of thought. The best of books is but a book, written indeed in

the full foresight of future contingencies by the Divine Inspirer, and with the fullest insight into the human heart; but at the same time written long ago in states of society widely different from any which now exist, and teeming with allusions to manners, customs, and institutions, which have long since passed away. It will be a help, surely, a great help, for the right apprehension of it, if its truths come to us bathed in the dye and rich with the colours of a living experience, —if a single mind, strongly impressed with one or more testimonies of Truth, expounds, enforces, illustrates those testimonies in our hearing. What he says may be, nay, almost certainly will be, defective; may require supplementing by other minds, which are drawn more strongly to other sides of Truth; but at all events, from the circumstance of its having taken hold of his mind, it will be conveyed with a force which it would lack, if it were simply read out of the Scriptures. May we say, in illustration of the subject, that Preaching is the appointed Ordinance for turning the Word of God into the Voice of God? There is a great difference between a word and a voice. A voice is a living word. A sentence may be written in a book; but it wants emphasis and articulation to bring out to the ear its full meaning and its harmonious rhythm. Preaching is for the emphasizing of the written Word of God; for the fastening close attention on certain parts of it; for the giving it light and shadow, and thus bringing out its doctrines in relief; for the exhibition of the glorious harmony which knits together in unity its various testimonies. Thus much needed to be said of it, in order to show that it comes into the plan of God for the edification of souls, and that it is no mere ornamental adjunct of the Christian Ministry, but an essential Ordinance of it.

And if anything were needed to vindicate the wisdom of such an Ordinance, surely it would be abundantly sufficient to quote the experience of the Church in all ages. The Scriptures she has always possessed, although it is only since the invention of

printing and the general diffusion of elementary education that this pearl of great price has become accessible to every one who bears the name of Christian. But at certain periods, and in certain parts of the Church at all periods, preaching has been entirely in abeyance; the ministers have been either incompetent from ignorance, or unwilling from indolence, to perform this great function. And what has been the character of those periods, and of those sections of the Church, during such abeyance? A character of entire deadness and abject superstition. Religion has been reduced to a series of rites, which have been regarded by the people with a superstitious awe, but have taken no hold whatever of the understanding and the conscience. It is so now, amidst all the religious enlightenment of the nineteenth century. Churches where there is no preaching are in an impotent, lifeless, and corrupting state. And wherever there is a revival of life in them, there preaching, in one form or another, has been the main instrumentality by which the revival has been brought about. It has been found fallacious (however plausible) to allege, "In all civilized Christian countries are not the Scriptures and good books open to the people?" Experience shows that, though they may be open, they are not read without some additional stimulus. People have not much time for reading, nor in general much disposition for it. And it comes to pass, accordingly, that the majority hear very little of the Word of God, if their attention is not regularly called to it in Church. Nothing can prove more conclusively than this fact of experience the wisdom of the arrangement, which has provided for a succession of uninspired teachers and preachers in the Church of Christ.

But we said above, that by our formality and thoughtlessness we might easily nullify this provision made by God for the edification of His Church. Indeed, it may be so. The great object of preaching being that the Truth of God may reach the people through the mind and heart of the minister, this object is of course frustrated if the mind and heart of the

minister be not really brought in contact with the Truth. It necessarily follows from what has been said that, if the Sermon be not (I do not say brilliant or eloquent, but) thoughtful and to a certain extent experimental, there might as well be no sermon at all. In that case the form of the Ordinance is complied with, but the spirit of it is disregarded. The Sermon is only valuable as an exposition of some truth—or truths—which has taken hold of the preacher's mind, which has at the very least interested him, or (much better) struck him forcibly as a motive to godliness; and if this be not the case, if it is to be reduced to a string of texts, or a mere repetition (in much feebler language) of Scriptural doctrines or precepts, surely the obligation to say something (when there really is nothing to say) might as well be dispensed with. The preacher's office is to give the people the result of his meditation on Holy Scriptures, and thus to guide them in the arduous task of meditating for themselves. But if in no sense he meditates—if he brings neither mind, nor conscience, nor heart to the inspired passages which he proposes to illustrate—surely the Ordinance is in that particular case liable to be frustrated.

We have seen what the substantial part of Preaching is, and what is the ground of its efficacy. A few remarks may appropriately be added on its outward form. It might be not unreasonably thought that in these days, when admirable works of Devotion are so multiplied, Preaching might be at all events for the educated and reading classes dispensed with. If its essence be the instruction of man by man in Divine Truth, this, it may be supposed, would be as much secured by reading a work of piety (perhaps itself a sermon) as by hearing a sermon in the Church. Without questioning that a great blessing may rest (and often has rested) upon the reading of good books, we are unable to assent to the force of this reasoning. It is open to any author to publish a religious work; and if an ordained minister does so, he hardly stands upon his commission when he does it, but rather upon the general

right, which he shares in common with others, to put forth whatever he thinks may edify and instruct the public. He is no longer speaking *ex cathedrâ*; and accordingly what he says becomes a mere expression of private opinion, without any official sanction. It is different surely with words spoken from the pulpit. They are spoken in the very theatre of the Ordinances of Religion. He who speaks, although he speaks fallibly, yet speaks in virtue of his commission, and sits for the time being in the chair of One greater than Moses. It is strictly an official transaction; and the office is no less than the ministry of souls. The address is preceded and followed by prayer, and forms, as we now see, an integral part of the highest Service of the Church. In a word, the Sermon here appears in the character which some would refuse to it, but which we stoutly assert for it,—the character of an Ordinance of Religion, founded on Our Lord's commission to the Twelve, and on St. Paul's charge to the un-inspired Timothy. Surely this is a very much more solemn delivery of God's message than any diffusion of it by means of the press, and one on which His especial blessing may be expected to attend, whenever the hearts of preachers and people are set to the right key.

And we cannot but think that, upon the whole, the experience of Christians affirms the difference between Truth announced under, and Truth announced independently of, the Divine Commission. Do sermons, when read, usually make the same impression as the same sermons when preached? Or do they seem to have lost something of their fire, and fervour, and special interest? If so, what reason can be assigned for the difference? Doubtless there are certain natural causes in operation to produce the effect. It cannot be disputed that oral delivery, with all its accompaniments of gesture, look, intonation, gives an effect to words, and brings them into a relief, if I may so say, which they cannot have, while they lie flat and mute on the page. But this and other natural laws are probably made subordinate by God, in working out the efficacy

of His Ordinances. Grace attends those Ordinances, wherever they are duly administered; and Grace turns the mere circumstantials to account, and makes them minister to the general effect.

It only remains to remark that but one sermon is provided for by our Prayer Book; and that this occurs as a part of, and is embraced within, the Communion Office. The circumstance is not without a very important lesson, which we shall do well to carry away. Our Prayer Book gives us the perfect theory of Divine Worship, as distinct from the disturbances and modifications which circumstances introduce into the theory; and the theory is, that there shall be *but one sermon* on each Sunday and Festival. The *necessity* of attaching a sermon (as is usually done) to each Service arises merely from the fact that a very large portion of our congregations, being unable to come to Church in the morning, would never hear a sermon at all, unless one were delivered at the later Services. And the *desirableness* of multiplying these opportunities of illustrating and enforcing the Word of God arises from a circumstance, which is no necessity at all, but the fault of our age,—the mental indolence of hearers. It is an age, alas! of much hearing, and of much running to and fro, in order to hear, but of lamentably little thought. Men like to be stirred by impressive appeals,—as many as you please, one dislodging the other incontinently from the mind,—but they do not like to carry those appeals home, to turn them over in their minds, to compare them with Holy Scripture, to extract spiritual nourishment from them by meditation, to found prayers upon them in the week. They will sit passive to receive emotions; but they will not exert themselves to foster those emotions, to consider the grounds of them, to nurse them in the warm hotbed of the heart, till they burst into the green shoot of spiritual life. If we could find now-a-days a meditative hearer, who did not merely submit himself to be wrought upon, but co-operated with the preacher by

an effort afterwards to recall, to retain, to ponder, and to pray, we do not scruple to say that in his case one sermon would be more profitable—far more profitable—than two ; nay, that the spiritual instincts of such an one would lead him, after the Eucharist of the morning, to desire nothing more beyond the Evensong of the Church, fully, and decorously, and joyously performed. The real truth is, that a mind seriously occupied with one line of thought resents as an interference the intrusion of another which is entirely different. But, alas ! we have to deal in general with minds too indolent, and too little interested in our great themes, to give them any afterthought ; and we must deal with men as we find them, and as the discursive habits of thought now popular have made them, and without assuming that they will ponder what they hear, must fling abroad much seed of God's Word, to multiply the chances of some seed clinging to the soil.

But it is a shallow habit of mind, that of dismissing the preacher's topic as soon as he has been heard out ; and so long as it continues in hearers, it is not to be wondered at that we see little fruit of preaching. God requires of us that we should be in His House something more than mere recipients of impressions. He requires spiritual diligence on our part, before He will bless what we hear to our real furtherance in knowledge and in grace. May we one and all of us lay it to heart ! To be hearers of His Word is little ; nay, only entails upon us an additional responsibility. May He make us intelligent, inquiring, thoughtful listeners, who in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.



## CHAPTER VI

*OF THE ALMS AND OBLATIONS; AND OF THE SACRIFICIAL CHARACTER OF THE HOLY COMMUNION*

“I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?”—I COR. x. 15-22

THE Sermon ended, an entirely new feature of the Office of the Holy Communion comes into view, which is thenceforth developed in several different forms. This is the Sacrificial character of the Office, which we propose to exhibit in the present Chapter.

The Priest returns to the Lord’s Table, and begins the Offertory, saying one or more sentences of Scripture (the majority of them advocate almsgiving in general; three set forth the claims which the clergy have for maintenance upon those to whom they minister); during the reading of which his “Deacons, Churchwardens, or other fit persons, receive the Alms for the Poor, and other devotions of the People, and reverently bring such Alms to the Priest, who humbly presents and

places them on the Lord's Table." Then the Priest is directed to "place upon the Table so much Bread and Wine as he shall think sufficient." Both these are offerings by act and deed. The verbal offering follows immediately; for the first petition in the Prayer for the Church Militant runs thus: "We humbly beseech Thee most mercifully to accept our *alms* and *oblations*."

The questions which arise upon reading these Rubrics, and which require a brief answer here, are, "What are the *other devotions* of the people, distinct from their alms?" and "What is meant by the *oblations*, as distinct from the *alms*, in the Prayer for the Church Militant?" These are moot points, upon which learned men have disagreed; and we therefore offer our judgment upon them with great diffidence. Moreover, the investigation of these points would be foreign to the scope of this work; and we must therefore ask the reader to accept our conclusion without the grounds upon which it has been formed. It appears to us, then, that the compilers of this and other Offices of the Reformed Church have been anxious to keep as far as possible to the primitive model, without providing for any modifications of detail which the altered circumstances of the Church might from time to time necessitate. In the primitive age of the Church there were "devotions of the people," made at the Holy Communion, which did not fall under the head of alms. Not very long ago tithes used to be paid among ourselves in kind; and in quite the old days, corn, bread, wine, oil, Church ornaments, robes for the clergy, chalices, and other sacred vessels for the Altar, used to be offered at the Holy Communion, as well as money. This is a well-ascertained fact; and side by side with it is another fact, which will be found helpful in illustrating the subject.

The Bread and Wine to be consecrated were not, as now, "provided by the Curate and Churchwardens at the charges of the Parish," but were taken by the officiating Priest out of the Bread and Wine brought as an offering (for the sustentation of the Clergy and the

Poor) to the great Christian Festival. Let us bear in mind also the circumstance which has been brought before us in a previous Chapter, that in the Apostolic times the Eucharist was celebrated in the course of an actual meal, to which all who could afford to do so contributed a small stock of provisions. These provisions would always partly consist of Bread and Wine, whatever else might be added; and of this Bread and Wine a portion would be consecrated for the purpose of the Ordinance; while the rest would be consumed at the Love-Feast or Supper in connexion with it. Taking these facts into consideration, and weighing what else has been said on either side of the subject, it seems to us that by the words "*other devotions of the people,*" as well as by the word "*oblations,*" in the Prayer for the Church Militant, is meant first the Bread and Wine, which have just been placed upon the Holy Table, and which, as they are (or ought to be) provided "at the charges of the Parish," are an oblation which comes from "the people;" and, secondly, any offerings which may be made at that time (whether in the form of money or in any other shape) for pious purposes, as distinct from the relief of the poor.

Such offerings in these days might take the shape of a contribution (folded in paper, and the object specified) to some of our great Church Societies, or of an addition to the endowment of a Church, or of some aid in the maintenance of the current expences of Divine Worship. For note the direction of the final Rubric as to the disposal of moneys collected at the Offertory: "After the Divine Service ended, the money given at the Offertory shall be disposed of to such *pious and charitable* uses, as the Minister and Churchwardens shall think fit." Observe,—not charitable exclusively, but "*pious and charitable.*" The money given specifically for "charitable" uses I take to be the "alms." The money given specifically for "pious" uses I take to be part of the "oblations." But as matters stand now, the principal oblation, and generally speaking the only one, is the Bread and Wine, which are to be placed upon

God's Board, as we have seen, immediately after the alms. When the words, "We beseech Thee mercifully to accept our alms and oblations," follow immediately after these arrangements, it is hard indeed to resist the conclusion that the Bread and Wine are regarded as oblations.

Now this word "oblations" (however we may choose to interpret it) leads us at once to the Sacrificial character of the Eucharist. An oblation is an offering made to God. The first oblations we read of as made in the Christian Church are thus described: "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet."

And that the giving of money or property for pious and charitable uses has a true and real sacrificial character, is shown by plain testimonies of Holy Scripture; "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." And it is somewhat remarkable that St. Paul, who in the Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of the Sacrifice of Christ (which surely must stand alone in all its glorious and unapproachable virtue) as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour," does not hesitate, in that to the Philippians, to speak in similar terms of the miserable and flawed offerings which God condescends to accept from His people for the service of His Church and poor. "I have all, and abound," says the Apostle, acknowledging the supplies which had reached him through Epaphroditus; "I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."

We have no difficulty, then, in justifying from Holy Scripture the words, "We beseech Thee mercifully to accept our alms and oblations." But the great Prayer passes on rapidly to the recognition of another sort of Sacrifice; "and to receive *these our prayers*, which we offer unto Thy Divine Majesty."

All prayer,—intercessory prayer particularly,—is an oblation. Incense was a constant offering under the Old Dispensation ; and prayer is spiritual incense, an odour of pious affections and desires, kindled by the Holy Ghost upon the heart's altar, and ascending thence to Him who kindled it. And accordingly, it is written, " Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense ; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."—For prayer in its sacrificial aspect see also the eighth chapter of the Revelation,—a most precious passage, as showing that angels are employed in sending our prayers aloft, and presenting them before God, and also that it is only in virtue of their union with the much incense of Our Lord's Intercession that they can possibly be accepted : " And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer ; and there was given unto him *much incense*, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne."—Compare also the striking words of the angel to Cornelius : " Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." Our prayers, then, in addition to our alms, are a sacrifice well pleasing to God, through Jesus Christ.

But we pass on rapidly to the first Post-communion Prayer, where we find two more important ideas developed. The first is, that the entire Office of the Communion, the whole act from beginning to end, is " a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving." " We thy humble servants entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving." For the sacrificial character of praise compare Heb. xiii. 15 : " By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name."

The second is, that inasmuch as we renew our vows to God at the holy Table, and our vows resolve themselves into self-surrender, there is in the Communion a presentation of ourselves as a living sacrifice, according to that word of the Apostle, " I beseech you therefore,

brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." "Here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee."

The sum and substance of what has been said is, that alms, prayer, praise, self-surrender, are all spoken of as sacrifices of the New Testament; and inasmuch as these religious exercises all find a place in the Holy Communion, and all culminate there, the act which embraces all these in itself must be sacrificial.

But is the Eucharist itself, apart from the devotional exercises with which it is connected, of a sacrificial character? We entirely believe so. We believe that a full recognition of this sacrificial character is virtually contained in the text; that any candid person, studying the argument of this inspired passage, will not be able to resist the conclusion that the Communion is sacrificial. The Apostle is dissuading the Corinthian Christians from participating in meats that had been offered to idols. He does this by reference to a principle well known and admitted among the Jews—that those who ate of a sacrifice, part of which had been offered to God, were sharers with the Altar. The part consumed upon the Altar was the Altar's share; and the Altar represented God, who in sacrifice was supposed to hold communion with the worshippers by a participation of common food with him. Apply this principle, then, to the idol-sacrifices, which are consumed by the heathen worshippers, after they have been presented to the idol. As heathendom is under the dominion of Satan, who is the ruler of the darkness of this world, it is to him and his angels—in short, to devils—that heathen sacrifices are really (albeit unconsciously) offered. The idol, the mere image of wood and stone, is in itself nothing; but it represents the Devil, who is behind it, and is upholding the great system of idolatry in the world. By eating of an idol-sacrifice, then, a man becomes sharer of the

Devil's board, and hath a fellowship with devils. Now, asks the Apostle, is there not a gross and grievous inconsistency, obvious to common sense, in a man's seeking to share both the Lord's Table and the table of devils? In the Holy Communion, the Christian shares with the Lord. In partaking of the meat offered to idols, he shares with the Devil. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy," by dividing our participation between Him and the Devil—sharing first of His Board in the Christian assembly, and then sharing of the Devil's board at some heathen entertainment, a few hours afterwards? Such is manifestly the tenour of the argument. But does it not virtually imply that the Lord's Supper stands to Christians in the place which idol-sacrifices and Jewish sacrifices held respectively to heathen and Jewish worshippers? Deny this altogether; maintain that there is no analogy between a Jewish sacrifice and the Holy Communion, and that there is no such thing as sacrifice competent to worshippers under the Gospel; and do you not cut away the ground from under the Apostle's argument? Whereas admit (what indeed no one would think of denying except from controversial prepossessions) that the Lord's Table is the Christian Altar, and that the act of Communion is a really sacrificial act, bringing us into communion with Christ, as the eating of idol-sacrifices brought men into communion with the Devil, and as the eating of Jewish sacrifices brought men into communion with the Covenant God of the Jews; and the argument then becomes clear and consistent, and the practical deduction from it inevitable.

The truth is, that the sacrificial character of the Eucharist would be generally recognised by all thoughtful persons, who take the Scriptures as their guide, if it were not feared that the admission would be in favour of the Roman view of the Ordinance. It is a great mischief, uniformly attending upon perversions of the Truth in one direction, that they ensure perversions of it in the other. The Roman Church, twelve hundred years after Christ, invented the monstrous figment of

Transubstantiation, in virtue of which it is pretended (to use the language of our thirty-first Article) that “the Priest” in the Communion doth “offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt.” So horrible a blasphemy (for in truth it is nothing less) has very naturally made Protestants altogether suspicious of the application of the term “Sacrifice” to the Lord’s Supper; and it is commonly supposed among them that to invest the Ordinance with any such character would be to obscure the great Offering of Calvary—that “full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction,” which was once made “for the sins of the whole world,” and which most assuredly can never be repeated. It is asserted also, and generally received as indisputable, without much reflection on the reasonableness of such a view, that the Old Dispensation had sacrifices continually recurring, which were in truth propitiatory; but that the New is distinguished from the Old by the circumstances that the performance of sacrifice by worshippers is abolished, and that the only sacrifice recognised by the Dispensation is that offered by the Eternal Priest. But there is here a large amount of fallacy and confusion of thought which it will illustrate our subject to disentangle. There is none other satisfaction for sin, then, but the Sacrifice of Christ alone. You cannot make this assertion in terms stronger than the Scriptures warrant. There is no other transaction in Heaven or earth, which can wash away a single stain of sin, or relieve a single burdened conscience, or open a door in Heaven for grace and mercy to stream forth upon guilty man, but merely and exclusively the meritorious Death of Christ. I say, *no other*. No other transaction, whether under the Law or under the Gospel. The Lord’s Supper is utterly powerless to produce these great effects. But neither could the legal offerings produce them. Their incompetence is expressly stated by the Apostle; “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” And what is said of the blood of bulls and



goats applies with equal force to any religious transaction whatever, the agents in which are human worshippers and human priests. O that we could see this truth as God sees it! The most dignified and solemn rite in the world, albeit of Divine Institution, cannot so much as put forth a finger to lighten the load of human guilt, or to arrest the course of God's justice upon the sinner; nor if all the beasts of Lebanon were slain for a burnt-offering, and all its cedar forests hewn down to form a pile, would the vast hecatomb be more efficacious. Why, then, it may be asked, were sacrifices continually offered under the Law, if they could not (as the Apostle assures us they could not) relieve the worshipper's conscience, nor in any way affect the relations between him and God? The answer to this is, first, that such sacrifices were divinely instituted, and were therefore binding upon the ancient Church, whether they could or could not see the ground of them. Secondly, that as being divinely instituted, they must have been in some degree means of grace. Thirdly, that they were representations, before the event, of the one Offering of the Death of Christ, and, as such, consoled the faithful with the thought that God would, in His own good time, provide a really efficacious Atonement. But now, is there no Ordinance under the New Testament, which is in the first place divinely instituted, in the next place a means of grace, in the third place a representation (after the event) of the Death of Christ? Can it be denied that our own Church at least (whatever may be the case with the Protestant sects) fully and emphatically recognises all these attributes as attaching to the Supper of the Lord? Then what is the legitimate and necessary inference? That the Supper of the Lord (though in no sense expiatory) is the Sacrifice of the New Dispensation;—that it is to Memory exactly what the Jewish Sacrifices were to Hope; that here, in short, we have Sacrifice, with its external form altered (as having been brought out into the light of a better economy), but with its essential features (viz.

Divine institution, instrumentality of grace, representation of the Lord's Death) remaining untouched. The Gospel is a Dispensation of Mercy, and therefore no blood flows in our Sacrifice, as in those of the Law, which worketh wrath. Our Sacrifice is a very simple rite; for the whole character of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is simplicity combined with depth. But it is no less a commemoration of the Death of Christ after the fact, than the legal sacrifices were a foreshadowing of it, before it took place. The outpoured wine of the one is as significant as the shed blood of the other. "For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do show the Lord's Death till He come."

It should be added, by way of completing the argument, that the idea of sacrifice being necessarily propitiatory in its character is an entire misapprehension, founded on ignorance (too prevalent unhappily among those, who pride themselves upon adherence to Scripture) of the Jewish Levitical Law. Expiation of sin is not the fundamental idea of Sacrifice at all. Sin-offerings and trespass-offerings no doubt there were, in which there *was* a remembrance of sin, and into the idea of which, therefore, expiation did enter as one element of them. But these were only particular species of the genus Sacrifice, which embraced besides burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, drink-offerings, peace-offerings, and free-will offerings. The fundamental idea of all these varieties seems to be man rendering unto God something which pleases and satisfies Him, whether in the way of self-surrender, gratitude, voluntary acknowledgment, or expiation. Man can never expiate; but it does not follow that, when forgiven and accepted, he cannot offer an acceptable homage.

Let us seek, in conclusion, to give a practical turn to these reflections, by paying attention to that verse, with which the Apostle concludes his warning against participation of idol-sacrifices; "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" The literal idol-sacrifice has ceased. Yet are there innumerable idols, even in the nominally

Christian world, with trains of worshippers who hold communion with them, if not sacramentally, yet in heart and spirit. There is Mammon with his troop of idolaters,—all those who, whether miserly or not, secretly regard the comforts and resources of this world as the one great object of human existence. There is Ashtaroth, with her impure and licentious orgies, drawing votaries to her altars with the lure of sensuality. There is Moloch, to whom human victims are still offered, when children of tender age and young women are ground down by the oppressiveness of a cruel social system, and the employer will give no other terms than long hours and low wages. The sun shining in his strength, the moon walking in brightness, and other objects of natural beauty, have still the power to entice the heart and attract the salutes of many; for there is a Pantheistic talk making itself heard among us, in circles calling themselves philosophical and refined, to the effect that all things have some particle of Divinity, and rightfully challenge some species of worship. There is Reason, and her throng of worshippers, all following after the *ignis fatuus* of intellectual power, in whatever form it may display itself, and forsaking the old beaten paths of homely Scriptural Truth. These are all idols, with devils behind them, maintaining and abetting their worship. Present not yourself to hold communion with Christ, while you communicate with these,—while you are drawn by their fascinations, and do homage at their shrine. Do you provoke the Lord to jealousy? Know that He will not share thy heart with any idol god; and as often as you approach the Christian Altar, reflect that the condition of partaking of the Lord's Table to the soul's health is, that communion with the world, the flesh, and the devil be first sincerely renounced.

### NOTE ON THE SACRIFICIAL CHARACTER OF THE HOLY COMMUNION.

I HAVE received from a dignitary of the Church the following adverse criticism on the argument contained in this Chapter, pp. 104, 105. As I cannot quite seize the point of the objection which he raises (and am, of course, therefore unable to concur in it), I might misrepresent the learned writer, if I did not allow him to speak for himself. He says,—

“You state that St. Paul warns the Corinthians against taking part in idol feasts, upon the ground of the inconsistency there was in the same person being a partaker of the table of devils and also of the table of the Lord; and you conclude that the Lord’s Supper must be a sacrifice, in order to give force to the Apostle’s argument.

“From the premises as stated by you, this conclusion would undoubtedly follow. But I submit, with great deference, that the Apostle argues, *not from the inconsistency* of the thing, but its *impossibility* (οὐ δύνασθε, ye can not); and to this the notion of a sacrifice in the Sacrament appears to me to be, not only not essential, but absolutely opposed.

“Because, in the case of a sacrifice (as you show, page 104), the person who eats of it becomes partaker with the being to whom it is offered, by the very act of eating. Therefore, if the Lord’s Supper were a sacrifice, the person who ate of it would, by eating, be a partaker with the Lord. But St. Paul says that he cannot be so, if he have participated in the idol feast; from which (as it seems to me) the unavoidable conclusion is, that the Sacrament cannot be a sacrifice, in any sense of the word.

“If it were so, it could only be, I think (to give coherence to the argument), the Sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated. For, in the cases from which the Apostle argues, the sacrifices eaten at the festive tables were the very same, or part of the same, that had been offered on the altar (the altar and the table being separate and distinct from each other in both cases). Therefore, to complete the parallel, so far from the Lord’s Table being the Christian altar, one must be distinct from the other; and the sacrifice eaten at the table must be the very same sacrifice that was offered on the altar—*i.e.*, the sacrifice of the Lord Himself, offered on the altar of the Cross.

“You say (page 107) that ‘the Supper of the Lord (though in no sense expiatory) is to Memory exactly what the Jewish sacrifices were to Hope;’ and you indicate, in the following page, that its parallel is to be sought among those which were simply Eucharistic, and into which expiation did not enter as an element. But were *these* the sacrifices that were associated with Hope? Were they not rather those that, in their expiatory

blessing, told of the coming Redeemer? Therefore, if the Sacrament occupy the place in the Christian dispensation which they did in the Jewish, must it not be expiatory also? If it be connected with the Sacrifice of the Lord retrospectively in the same way that they were prospectively, it should necessarily, I think, be of the same character as they."

In the two last Chapters of the Appendix I have drawn out more fully, and with more dogmatic precision, what I believe to be the truth on the doctrine of Sacrifice, and on the Eucharistic Sacrifice in particular; and to these Chapters the reader is referred for a further prosecution of the subject dealt with in the above criticism.

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## CHAPTER VII

### *OF THE COMMEMORATION OF THE DEAD IN THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY COMMUNION*

"But ye are come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect."—HEB. xii. 22, 23

**I**N the Prayer for the Church Militant there are three great features, the Oblation, the Intercessions, and the Commemoration of the Dead. Of the two first of these we have spoken sufficiently. The last is a feature which requires further development than the passing notice which we took of it in an earlier Chapter.

The concluding clause of the Prayer, to which we refer, "And we also bless thy holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear; beseeching thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom," was added at the last Review of the Office, all mention of the dead having been in abeyance from the time of the Second Book of Edward VI., from which intercession for the spirits of the departed righteous (such as had found place in the First Book) was carefully expunged, until the year

1662, when the English Liturgy received its finishing touches. It shall first be pointed out how the addition is justified by Holy Scripture.

In the context of the passage which stands at the head of this Chapter, the Apostle is warning Christians to beware lest they despise their privileges, and, by apostatizing for the sake of worldly comfort or advantage, recklessly throw them away. This would be to imitate the conduct and the fate of profane Esau, "who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." For, says he (this seems to be the connexion of thought), your privileges as Christians are high and great,—far greater than those of the Church under the Law. And then he proceeds to enumerate them. They (the Hebrew Christians) had not come to a literal mountain, which might be touched; but to a spiritual eminence, in whose high and celestial atmosphere they had communion with God, with Christ, with angels, with the entire Church of God, whether now in warfare, or at rest, and specifically with the spirits of just men made perfect. Such is the general scope of the argument. We will now fasten our attention on this particular part of it, which makes for our present purpose,

"Ye are come to the spirits of just men made perfect."

Observe first the difference of this representation of Christian privileges from those which are commonly current. Our usual religious parlance places our privileges in the future. Holy Scripture places them in the present. It is the popular phraseology to say, "Good Christians shall come to Heaven hereafter." Scripture rather says, "Good Christians are come to Heaven already." The word is (and the translation is here strictly accurate) "*Ye are come*" (or "*Ye have come*") "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels;"—not "*Ye shall come.*" They had already come, the Apostle says, to a Society, to a Community; and he shows very plainly to every thoughtful reader what are the characteristics of the

Society. It is an unseen, invisible, spiritual Society,—one which cannot be reached or apprehended by the senses. But it may be said: “The Church is the Society in question; and is not the Church visible? can it not be seen? When a Christian Congregation meets for worship, is not the Church then visible?” Doubtless there are members of the Church, who are still in the flesh; and these we may of course see, and effect a meeting with them in the body. But the bodily meeting, the being assembled in one place, is not the ground of our union even with these. The ground of our union lies much deeper. It consists in our having, “one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all,” in our all belonging to the Body of Christ, in our all being made partakers of one Spirit, and having all one hope of our calling. But the recognition of Christ, faith, hope, acknowledgment of God as Father, membership in the Lord’s Body, these things are all spiritual, internal, hidden; and though Christians meet together on earth for Divine Worship, it is not as men in flesh that they meet together, but as having an union of mind, heart, hope, and being under the influence of the one Spirit of God. The Society therefore of Christ’s Church is essentially spiritual, although certain members of it may accidentally have a local connexion, and be clustered together bodily in one and the same spot.

But then this introduces a new thought. Invisible beings may have a true communion with us in the Church of Christ. Why not, if the Church is spiritual and in no sense bodily, if it recognise merely our eternal and not our temporal relations? If angels adore the same Lord, and are earnestly waiting for the same final manifestation of Him as we, if angels, by His appointment, succour and defend us upon earth, are they not in some sufficient sense members of the same Community, although we see them not? And what of the spirits of the departed righteous? Is it not easily concluded from the premises already laid down, that

our communion with them must be far closer than it was before they were delivered from the burden of the flesh? For then certainly much of sinful infirmity hung about them, which intercepted their view of Christ, and impeded grievously their communion with Him. Now they are with Him in Paradise. Now they see Him no more in a glass darkly, but face to face. Now they drink in joy from the consciousness of His presence and favour, and are full, as they never were before, of love and praise. So far from separating them from Him, Death has just eliminated from their nature the one element which did separate them,—which was sin. And accordingly their sympathy with us in our hope of glory, their desire for our salvation, the spiritual concern which they feel in us, must be stronger far and more fervent than ever.

And we must be nearer than ever to them, when we perform spiritual actions. For in the performance of those actions we draw nigh to Christ, with whom they are. In prayer we seek His face, and converse with Him. In reading or hearing His holy Word, He communes with us. In public worship, when we are gathered together in His Name, we place ourselves in His immediate Presence. But the closest intercourse of all, which can be enjoyed with Him upon Earth, is that which is vouchsafed to penitent and believing souls in the Holy Communion.—When, therefore, the spirit of the living Christian by any of these means of access draws nigh to the Throne of Grace, there is then between him and the spirits of just men made perfect a real nearness, the thought of which should be most consolatory to those whose friends have fallen asleep in Jesus. They are then breathing the same atmosphere of communion with Christ, which those breathe who are with Him in Paradise. The radii of a circle, in approaching the centre, cannot but, in the nature of things, draw near to one another; and two hearts, though separated by oceans and mountains—yea, though separated by that greater gulf which divides the seen from the unseen world,—if both approach that



great centre of attraction in the spiritual world, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," cannot but really and truly draw near to one another, though there may be no outward visible token of such nearness.

Such, then, is the doctrine of Holy Scripture on the subject of our communion with the spirits of just men made perfect. Now every doctrine of Scripture meets, while it regulates, some instinct of the human heart. It is, for example, an instinct of the heart to long for some true sympathy with us from Him who is the object of our worship. The assurance of this sympathy we find in the doctrine of the Incarnation; and here the instinct in question has its legitimate satisfaction. But it is regulated, as well as satisfied. Like all our instincts it is apt, through the perversion of our nature, to mislead us: and from indulging it too freely, and without restraint from the Word of God, has come Mariolatry and similar corrupt practices of the Church of Rome.—Again, it is an instinct of our nature to long for some outward visible sign of spiritual truths, for some appeal to the senses by the Religion which we adopt. When this instinct goes astray, and is under no regulation from the Word of God, it leads to idolatry. But the Word of God provides for the satisfaction of this instinct, and for its regulation at the same time, by the appointment of the two Sacraments. Here God admits an appeal to the senses, and indicates how far such an appeal may properly go.—Now there is in our nature a craving, which has manifested itself in various forms at various times, for some intercourse with the spirits of the departed, some tokens from them, some assurance of their reality,—with the departed generally, apart from any special relation in which they may have stood to ourselves. In all ages and in all countries tales have been current of apparitions of the dead,—pure inventions most of them, but showing by their popularity, and by the ready credence lent to them, the strong hold which this instinct has upon the human mind. But may it not

be said that it has lost its hold, at all events upon educated minds, in the enlightened age in which we live, when knowledge is so widely diffused, and superstition, one would hope, had taken fairly to flight? Assuredly not. What is the so-called spiritualism of the present day (rightly called spiritualism, forsooth, to distinguish it from that, of which it is a perverse and monstrous caricature,—spirituality) but an attempt to break a passage between this world and the realm of departed spirits, and to call them back to familiar converse with flesh and blood? It is not to our present purpose to inquire whether the phenomena alleged to be exhibited are the result of clever imposture or of real witchcraft (whichever alternative be chosen by those who profess the powers in question, it is almost equally discreditable to themselves); suffice it that the appearance of such phenomena in the full noontide blaze of scientific knowledge clearly proves how deeply rooted in the human heart is the yearning for communion with the dead. Unregulated, not bridled in with the rein of Reason and of Scripture, this instinct runs away with the mind, and carries it down the dark precipice of a real or pretended necromancy! But the Word of God, and the Liturgy of the Church, satisfy the instinct while they control it. The Word of God tells us certain, sober, and most reliable truths concerning the departed righteous,—that they are with Christ in Paradise; and that, therefore, we, by seeking Christ diligently, and cultivating a larger measure of intercourse with Him, may certainly come into their immediate neighbourhood. We are one with them, when we hold true communion with Our Lord; for “we are come unto the spirits of just men made perfect.” And in the Ordinance which is the chief instrument of this Communion, our Liturgy, advancing up to, while she does not presume to exceed, the limits laid down in the Word of God, teaches us to think of all those who have departed this life in God’s faith and fear, to commemorate them solemnly before God, to seek grace to follow their example, to aspire

to that crown of righteousness, which by faith and patience they have won. But, alas! these truths, this devout practice founded upon them, are too homely, too familiar for us; they savour too much of the Catechism and the Sunday School. We go in preference after signs and wonders, which may excite us with a pleasing trepidation; and instead of thinking of the dead as communing with Christ in Paradise, picture them to ourselves as busy among the furniture of our houses, making noises audible to the outward ear, sweeping their hands over our musical instruments, or spelling out (with many a blunder) secrets, the sublimest of which is not above the range of fortune-telling. Even so the hungry Israelites turned away with disgust from the manna, the angels' food which fell from heaven, and lusted for the fish and fleshpots of Egypt, which made more of a riot in their blood.

But the natural craving for some intercourse with the dead is of course swollen to much larger dimensions, in case the dead have stood in any special relation towards ourselves. Here comes in the strong instinct of natural affection,—one of the purest and best feelings which has survived the Fall. What a painful bleeding of the heart succeeds the loss of those who have walked side by side with us in the thorny paths of this life, even though we have good ground for believing that they have been taken to their rest! What a mystery is their removal from us—this moment by our side, full of kindly sympathies with us, and interests for us, and frequent and fervent in the expression of those interests; and now, not ceasing indeed to be animated with the same sentiments, but having no means of communicating them to us! Will no one bring them what the Apostle calls “our earnest desire, our mourning, our fervent minds towards them,” our assurance that they live still in our memory? Oh that in their case it might be permitted to us to rend the veil which hangs before the unseen world, and come at speech of them again! As the being close under a mountain's brow incapacitates us for judging of its

height, so while we are closely mixed up with our friends in the journey of life, we hardly do them justice in our estimate of them. It is not until they stand clear of the collisions and commonplace of daily life, that we seem to catch the real spirit and significance of their character. We see them now with a halo round their brow ; taken out of the action of life, they are idealized ; the very thought of them now is softening to us ; and we find it impossible to resist any appeal founded on their memory and example.

Such are the feelings and instincts of nature towards our departed friends. Like all our instincts, they may lead us astray. Very early in the history of the Church they began to lead Christians astray. Very early pure Religion began to be flawed and marred by too strong an ingredient of the sentimental. Prayers for the dead crept into the early Liturgies,—not indeed forbidden by God's Word, but nowhere commanded, and because not commanded, therefore surely at best questionable. But worse was still behind, for which this beginning paved the way. No sooner does prayer for the dead pass from the expression of a mere pious wish (such as St. Paul utters for Onesiphorus in his Second Epistle to Timothy, chap. i. 18) into a regular and systematized practice, than the thought introduces itself that their state is capable of improvement ; for else of what avail is Prayer ? This thought worked like leaven in the mind of the Church, and developed itself at length in the monstrous doctrine of Purgatory ; an imaginary penal fire, which should burn out from the souls of the righteous the relics of sinful infirmity, and the continuance of which might be abridged by the faithful intercessions of living friends. Our Reformers, when they addressed themselves to the task of purifying the Liturgy, found this most unscriptural and dangerous doctrine in full blossom in the minds of the people. There was no possibility of thoroughly eradicating it but by cutting away root and branch those prayers for the dead which it must be confessed are found in the earliest Liturgies,

but which were inextricably associated with the doctrine of Purgatory in the minds of the people. The eye of these Reformers knew not how to pity or to spare error; so with a wise austerity they took the axe in hand, and all prayers for the dead fell beneath its stroke from the Reformed Office of the Holy Communion. Thanksgiving, however, for the righteous dead, and prayer for grace to follow their example, is a thing wholly different in kind from intercession for them; and as soon as the Reformation was firmly established, it was thought not only safe, but desirable, to add to the Prayer for the Church Militant the clause which commemorates the departed righteous.

And surely it is a precious clause, and one which we cannot afford to lose. Surely without it the Office would lack its present beauty and perfection. This clause just meets, while it controls, the instinct which leads us to desire a re-opening of intercourse with our departed friends. It just administers to us the real Scriptural comfort concerning them, and there stops short. For what is the Scriptural comfort? "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." But that this may be a consolation to us, we need to be assured not only that our departed friends are in the bosom of Christ's Love, but that we ourselves shall ultimately be gathered into that bosom. The first is a subject of devout thankfulness. The second is a contingency, quite within the reach of faithful prayer. Accordingly we give thanks for the repose of our friends; and then by imploring grace to be followers of them even as they were of Christ, we aspire to the happy haven where now those beatified souls, after the storms of the world, ride quietly and triumphantly at anchor. Are they conscious of what we are doing,—sensible that we are bearing them on our hearts, and aspiring to be with them, while we present our homage at the

altar of God? It may be so. But this at all events is certain, that they are now most closely united with Christ; and that whether they are conscious of it or not, we are in their immediate neighbourhood, when we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood, when we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, when we are one with Christ and Christ with us. And I cannot but think, although it be only a private opinion, that they *are* more or less conscious of our nearness. If two harps are set to the same key, and the strings of one be struck, the other vibrates. And if two hearts having an original sympathy with one another, be drawn towards the same Saviour, probably there may be in both an instinct leading them to recognise their mutual nearness. And the dead, surely, must be more susceptible of spiritual instincts than those who are in the body.

But looking beyond the small circle of our departed friends, what a grand view of the Communion of Saints does this clause open to us! "For *all* those who have departed this life in thy faith and fear," do we bless God's holy Name. *All*,—under the Old Dispensation as well as the New. This clause sets us in imagination in the midst of a great multitude, which no man can number, "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," comprising infinite varieties of human character, yet all of them agreeing in this, that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and hold now in their hands the palm branch of victory, won by grace over sin and Satan. Venerable Patriarchs, the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble army of Martyrs, Abel and Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Samuel, and Isaiah, and Hezekiah, and St. John, and St. Paul, and St. Peter, and St. Stephen—the same principles of the faith and fear of God animated them all in life, and supported them all in death, although not to all of them was the great Object of faith revealed with equal clearness. What an august company is now with

Christ in Paradise, waiting till the "elect are numbered," and "the grave call" Him "to come and save"!

Let us cherish in our nearest approaches to the Throne of Grace the thoughts of joining them at that Day. Let us fortify ourselves by their example; and thinking of them as spectators of the course which we are ourselves running, let us scorn to do any thing unworthy of the good confession which they witnessed in their day, and the record of which is left for our encouragement. But, above all, let us fix our eye steadily upon the great central Object of faith,—the glorified Form, who stands at the end of the course with the garland of victory in His hand; for it is only by not allowing it to wander from Him, that we too shall prove in the end more than conquerors: "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, LOOKING UNTO JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH."

## PART III

### The Transept

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#### CHAPTER I

##### *OF THE EXHORTATION AT THE TIME OF THE COMMUNION*

“ Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,  
Neither cast ye your pearls before swine.”

MATT. vii. 6

THE Exhortations—both that in the Morning and Evening Prayer, and those in the Office of the Communion—are features which first made their appearance in the Reformed Prayer Book. But although not ancient, they are valuable, not only from the Scriptural doctrines which they set forth and enforce, but from their rationale, which we will now briefly explain. The Apostle, speaking of prayer and psalmody as parts of Public Worship, says, “I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” The words are applicable to every part of Worship, and particularly to the Office now before us, which is the highest part. Those who join in it should strive to combine fervour with intelligence. Not unfrequently in our Churches we see the two things separated. Who has not occasionally remarked among the aged poor an exhibition of unfeigned, heartfelt devotion, leading them to join audibly not only in the responses, but also in those parts of the Service which are spe-



cially appropriated to the Priest? Here is fervour without intelligence—the spirit without the understanding. Educated congregations err for the most part in the opposite, and worse, extreme. Their education may qualify them to understand the theory of the Service; but instead of throwing heart and soul into it, they are too often kept by a mistaken feeling of propriety, or by an awkward bashfulness, or sometimes by mere indifference to the blessings sought for, from making any response; and the result is an utter deadness in the whole proceeding, a want of fervour and unction, which, when contrasted with the sublime earnestness of the supplications, is painful and distressing in the extreme. Here is intelligence without fervour.—Now at the period of the Reformation, one great want of the Church seemed to be a want of understanding of her own Liturgical forms. The prayers had hitherto been offered, the Communion had hitherto been celebrated, in a “tongue not understood of the people.” Almost all persons needed instruction as to the significance and the contents of the Liturgy, which had degenerated into an unreasonable service. To correct this general ignorance, Exhortations were introduced, the scope of which was to lead the worshippers to prepare their hearts, and which summed up briefly the object and design of the Service. Nor have these exhortations lost their use in modern times, when religious knowledge is more widely spread. The impatience of them which some persons manifest, when they call them Sermons introduced into the prayers, and imply that they might well be dispensed with, is surely very unwise, as well as very disrespectful to those excellent divines, to whom we are indebted for the reformation of the Service Book. Does the mind need no preparation, before it enters directly upon the solemn Offices of Religion? And if it be admitted that “Before thy prayers prepare thyself” is a maxim not only of common reverence but of sound policy, inasmuch as preparation facilitates prayer, can it be denied that the Exhortations in our Prayer Book are admirable pre-

paratives for the Offices to which they introduce us, and that they sum up very succinctly and very scripturally the purport of what is to succeed? The truth is that, if they were listened to—if the mind were allowed a simple passage over the ideas contained in them, they would not be quarrelled with. But people being in the habit of regarding them as no part of the Prayers (which of course they are not), and as works of supererogation in Divine Worship, no attention is given to them; and since the mind creates for itself its own interests, and is indisposed to create one in reference to this part of the Service, the Exhortations are accounted wearisome. But let the attention be honestly applied to them, and the wearisomeness will vanish.

The Exhortation in the Communion precedes not indeed the whole of the Office, as in the Morning and Evening Prayer, but the more solemn part of it. At the end of the prayer for the Church Militant there is an obvious break, which is (or ought to be) signalized by the retirement of the non-communicants. To recur to an image, which was proposed at the opening of this work, we have advanced up the Nave, and now pass into the Transept of the Communion Office, where we gain a full view of the Sanctuary, and place ourselves in front of the steps (“the Comfortable Words”) which lead up into it. Here then is an appropriate opportunity of once more warning away those who would be unworthy recipients, and of declaring in what state of heart and mind worthiness consists. Thus for the second time “Begone, ye profane,” is sounded in the ears of those who approach the holy Mysteries,—a prohibition which had already been less explicitly issued by the stern precepts of the Law, re-echoed by the prayers of the people for mercy and grace.

Taking this warning away of the unworthy to be the salient point of the Exhortation (although indeed it has *many* points of great interest and importance), we shall make it, and the Scriptural foundation of it, the subject of our remarks in this Chapter.

“Give not that which is holy,” said our Lord, “to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.” The term “that which is holy” is applied in the Book of Leviticus (chap. xxii. 6) to the meat offered in sacrifice, which no person who had contracted ceremonial defilement was permitted to eat. “The soul,” it is said, “which hath touched any such” [any unclean thing], “shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water.” The same term “holy things” was very early applied in the Christian Liturgies to the consecrated elements of the Holy Communion. These consecrated elements, the holy things of the Church, and her pearls of great price, she will not throw before the dogs and swine; and therefore, acting on her Master’s counsel, she warns those who are not cleansed by penitence, faith, and love, to abstain from approach to the holy Table.

Thus the general principle of this warning is laid down by the Lord of the Church Himself. But the particular application of it to the case of the Holy Communion comes to us from the pen of St. Paul, in words which are cited in the Exhortation. The words run thus: “Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”

The excesses of the Corinthians, in connexion with the Supper of the Lord, have been already in a previous Chapter explained. Their sin consisted in treating it as an ordinary meal, “not discerning” (as the Apostle says), *i.e.* not distinguishing, “the Lord’s body” (the Sacrament of the Lord’s Body) from common food. To such lengths did their profanation go, that intemperance was sometimes witnessed at the Table, where the Christian Mysteries were partaken of. The sin had its *occasion*, as we have before pointed out,

in the original social character of the Paschal Supper, with which the Eucharist was connected; *its root* was to be found in the divisions between the rich and poor of the Corinthian Church, which made the former inconsiderate of the great truth that they were members of the same Body with the latter, and led them to snatch and engross to themselves the whole of the viands which they had brought with them, and to leave none for those, who could not afford to bring to the meeting any of their own. The punishment was severe, though not more so than the sin called for. The Corinthians, so celebrating the holiest Ordinance of Christianity, ate and drank—not “damnation”—(that word conveys a wholly erroneous notion of the original), but “a judgment” to themselves, from this unhallowed confusion between things sacred and profane. Some of them were visited with failing health in consequence; others were even stricken by death. Respecting the eternal state of such persons, as nothing is said, we have no means of forming an opinion. All we are told is that they fell ill, or died, by a judgment which their profaneness had incurred.

Now the question arises, “Can this sin be repeated in modern times, and under the altered circumstances of the Church?” To the answer we shall now address ourselves.

I. *In its outward form* the sin cannot be repeated. The precautions now taken render it an impossibility. Far too little of the consecrated elements is now given to satisfy hunger, or to afford the opportunity of intemperance and excess. The prescriptions of the Liturgy bar all disorderly conduct, while the congregation celebrates this holiest rite. Nor, if persons are now-a-days guilty of unworthy reception, do such results ever follow as the judicial infliction of sickness and death. In short, the outward form both of the sin and of its visitation was peculiar to the circumstances of the Apostolic Church, and has passed away, never to return.

II. It should be considered, however, that it is God's plan in Holy Scripture, on the first appearance of great offence, to make an example of the offenders, which example is not to be repeated, but to stand (as it were) upon the world's highway, a beacon of wrath for the warning of mankind. When Uzzah the Levite presumed to touch the ark of God, which none but the Priests might touch, and which the Levites might not even approach before it had been covered up, "God smote him there for his rashness, and he died by the ark of God." When Korah and his company arrogated to themselves the office of the priesthood, to which they had not been called, the earth swallowed them up, and all that appertained to them. When, after the promulgation of the Sabbath-Law to the Israelites, and the distinct direction issued to Moses, "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day," a man was found flying in the face of the precept, and gathering sticks upon the sabbath day, "The Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp." Thus under the old Economy did God vindicate by a solemn judgment once for all, and leave upon record His vindication of, the sanctity of holy things, holy persons, and holy seasons. And though it is most true that the new Economy is one of mercy, and not of judgment, similar instances must be given under the New Testament, by way of guarding its greater gifts and nobler institutions against irreverence. One of these is the judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira, who were struck with sudden death for a false pretence, made solemnly in the presence of the Apostle Peter. Another is the severe sentence, almost worse than a temporal judgment, pronounced by the same Apostle upon him who offered money for the power of conferring the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Another is the judgment upon Elymas the sorcerer, who was struck blind for resisting the influence of the Gospel in the heart of Sergius Paulus. A fourth is the judgment, sometimes in the

form of illness, sometimes in that of death, which took effect upon the Corinthians who profaned by excesses and disorders the holy Supper of the Lord.

Now, be it observed, that in all these cases, the form and circumstances of the sin are more or less obsolete. In the modern Church there is neither community of goods, nor miraculous gifts, nor sorcery, nor the practice of combining the Lord's Supper with a social entertainment. Yet it surely does not follow that the passages which record these several judgments are without warning for us now-a-days. Is there no warning in the tale of Ananias and Sapphira for persons who now-a-days make an insincere profession before the Church, and the rulers of the Church, like those candidates for Confirmation, who, while they profess to be surrendering their whole heart to Christ, and laying it down at the feet of His minister, are really keeping back a part for the world and for self? Is there no warning in the tale of Simon Magus for those who place the Ministry of the Church, and the gift of Holy Orders, on a level with a secular profession,—who virtually trade with those holy things, by thrusting themselves in with a view to gaining a livelihood? Is no such petition heard in the modern Church as, "Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices,"—not that I may exert my gifts in converting and saving souls, but—"that I may eat a piece of bread?" Is there no warning in the history of Elymas for those who obstruct serious impressions, when just beginning to be made upon the heart of another, by levity, by ridicule, by the insinuation of worldly sentiments and maxims, as the standard to which we ought to conform? In all these cases we must divest the sin of its outward form, and look at its principle.—And so in the case of the judgment upon the profane and disorderly Corinthians. We cannot, indeed, sin *in the same form* as they, against the Supper of the Lord. But our sin in respect of that holy Ordinance may embody and express the same principles in another form. Whenever we lightly regard, or allow ourselves to trifle with, this

or any other Ordinance of the Lord, we are incurring in greater or less measure, according to the amount of our levity and inconsiderateness, the guilt of these Corinthians. The extreme form of the sin now-a-days—the form which we may hope it seldom takes—would be the approaching the Lord's Table out of mere deference to custom, or because perhaps the office we hold, or the position we are in, requires it of us—the going through it as a sort of ceremony appropriate to state occasions, with a heart not in the least desirous of the grace of the Sacrament, and a spirit in no wise attuned to the beautiful devotion of the Office. Are we wrong in thinking that such a participation is now-a-days very rare? We trust not.—But, next, there may be a participation not upon the whole indevout,—certainly aiming at devoutness,—without such previous preparation, as the dignity and sacredness of the Ordinance requires. This is to be avoided; for, as the Exhortation before us well remarks, we ought to “consider how St. Paul exhorteth all persons diligently to try and examine themselves, before they presume to eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.” We are never to forget that there is an inspired precept for preparation, which runs thus: “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” This precept makes it wrong for us to approach without examination *in some form or another*,—without communing with our hearts on our own faults of character, and an earnest effort and resolve to amend them. But then this examination and self-communing may be with some people habitual. Surely it will be so with those, who are honestly aiming at spirituality, and seeking to live up to the highest standard. It may fairly be presumed that such persons will not usually retire to rest, without throwing back their eye over the past day, and asking a specific pardon for what may have been amiss in their character and conduct, and a specific grace to correct it in future. Can such persons need a special examination before the Holy Communion with the same urgency as those

need it, who never examine themselves at other times?—Nor ought we to understand by Self-examination the mere habit of asking ourselves at stated intervals a string of questions, which reduces the great exercise to a formality. If we watch for, and make ourselves acquainted with, the weak points of our own character, and struggle against them in secret prayer; if we apply the Holy Scriptures to our own conscience habitually, comparing or contrasting our frame of mind, and the tenour of our life, with that frame and tenour which they commend to us by precept and example; if, when we read David's Psalms, we ask ourselves how far we sympathize with his love of God's Law, and with his taste for devotion, and when we read any remarkable illustrations of faith and repentance, we seriously inquire how far we are under the operation of the same principles, and found confession, or prayer, or thanksgiving upon the answer,—surely we are not then living without self-examination, (for what but this is the intent and purpose of the exercise?) and surely our state is in that case one of habitual preparedness for the Supper of the Lord. It is, of course, a very different thing, if our daily private prayers be the mere repetition of a form; if we seldom read Holy Scripture, and seldom apply it to our consciences; if we acquiesce in our faults of character and temper, as something which must necessarily accompany us to our grave, and do not strive to correct them; if (in a word) we do not, in our daily life, seek to walk closely with God. The Supper is, no doubt, then profaned, if we approach it without a special period of devout preparation,—if we do not at least do at stated intervals what we ought to be doing continually.—And to all we may say, on the ground of St. Paul's warning to the Corinthians, "Cultivate in your minds a high and holy estimate of this blessed Sacrament; and allow nothing to lower this estimate." If you honestly find that frequency of repetition detracts from the sacredness of the Ordinance in your own mind; and if you are quite sure that you are not confounding liveliness of impression with that



strengthening of Christian principle, which is the great object of the Ordinance, then make your Communion less frequent. Nothing is expressly ruled in Scripture respecting the frequency of the Ordinance; and accordingly the Christian is left on this point to his own spiritual instincts, which will however surely be formed on such passages as these, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;" "The cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" and on the illustration which such passages derive from the practice of the early Church. Every man in this matter must direct himself, after having the elements which enter into a right decision laid before him. The fact of there being in many Churches a celebration of the Communion on every Sunday and Festival, is not to be construed as implying that it is expedient for all persons indiscriminately to communicate so often. Doubtless, where there is a sufficient number of Clergy in any Parish, the people have a right to demand that the perfect theory of their Church shall be carried out; and this perfect theory is daily Morning and Evening Prayer (for which there are daily Psalms and Lessons), and Holy Communion on Sundays and Festivals, for which there is always a new Epistle and Gospel. Many devout persons will always be found, who will thankfully avail themselves of the opportunities of communicating thus offered; while in reference to those who cannot at present feel it profitable to communicate so often, we abstain from all judgment of the conclusion at which they have arrived, and comply with the Apostle's direction, which may be very fitly accommodated to this matter: "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; . . . for" (may be) "God hath received him." In this, at least, the advocates both of frequent and rare Communion will be found to agree, that the holy things are not to be given to dogs,—that the holy Supper is unsuitable for the profane.

Yet, be it observed, lest those guests who are most

worthy should be discouraged from approaching the holy Table, that a sense of the defilement of sin is one of the chief qualifications for a right reception. Dogs may not draw nigh; nor may swine have the pearls of Christ's Body and Blood thrown before them; but those are not dogs, in the estimate of the Lord of the Church, who confess themselves to be so; nor those swine, who stir themselves out of the mire of their corruptions, and cry mightily for deliverance from them. She who accepted the title of dog, and with the ingenuity of faith rested upon that title her claim to a crumb of mercy, at length obtained the bread of the children, while confessing herself unworthy of it. And he who lies lowest in his own eyes, he who is accounted vile in his own sight, yet hangs on to Christ from the conviction that "him that cometh to" Him, He "will in no wise cast out" or spurn away, shall not plead in vain for a crumb of the Bread of Life, but, having come with hunger of heart to the heavenly Banquet, shall go away with the Virgin's experience upon his lips:—

"He filleth the hungry with good things."

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## CHAPTER II

### *OF THE INVITATION*

"He sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready."—  
LUKE xiv. 17

IT is certainly an argument against the Revision of the Liturgy that the longer and more closely we study it, the more we become convinced that an immense amount of care, and thought, and prayer has been spent upon its construction, and that a Scriptural and theological

erudition underlies the whole of it. We are apt to think that we can well afford to lose some of its minuter features; but a more careful consideration of the subject shows us that to strike out one of those features would be to forfeit a Scriptural idea, and might put a whole Service out of joint. Who would not say at first sight that we might spare from the Communion Office the invitation which precedes the Confession: "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways; Draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort"? It is but a single sentence, we might say; and the qualifications of communicants, which it briefly sums up, have been given us more at large in the longer Exhortation which precedes;—why repeat them? Yet, on second thoughts, would the Service be as consistent with Scripture and Primitive Antiquity, if this short sentence were away?

Would it be, in the first place, as consistent with Scripture? Let it be considered that the Lord's Supper is a miniature Gospel, a perfect little model of the New Dispensation in all its essential features. This New Dispensation—its happiness and privileges—the festive satisfaction which the soul finds in its blessings—are twice set forth by Our Lord under the image of a supper—"a great supper"—"a wedding festival." The certain man, who makes the great supper, sends his servants at supper-time to say to them that are bidden, "Come; for all things are now ready." The king, who made a marriage for his son, sends three detachments of his servants for the same purpose. By the agency of these servants guests are at length collected (in both parables) from the highways and hedges. In the last of them, when the king comes in to inspect the guests, he sees there a man who has not on a wedding garment, and expels him as an intruder. Every one knows the outline of the interpretation of these parables; that the blessings of

the Gospel were first proposed by Our Lord and His Apostles to the Jews ; that, when the higher and more educated Jews with Pharisaic scorn rejected it, the publicans and harlots pressed into the opened kingdom ; that ere long, since there still was room, the poor despised Gentiles thronged in from the highways and hedges of the world : but yet that it is by no means every nominal adherent to the Church of Christ, who will be found at the last great day of inspection, to have the internal qualifications for acceptance, which are set forth by the wedding garment. Now who does not see that this whole procedure is represented in brief in the Lord's Supper ? First there is an actual supper—a feast upon the symbols, which both represent and convey the Body and Blood of Christ, the true “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Then those are bidden to partake of this supper, who in contrition of heart feel deeply their need of a Saviour, and rejoice in the assurance of His dying Love, which the Sacrament conveys. Yet, though it be no merit of their own, but rather an acknowledgment of their utter demerit, which procures their acceptance as guests, they must not lack the internal qualifications of Repentance, Faith, and Love, which alone can make the banquet available to the strengthening and refreshing of their souls. Thousands of those, who communicate outwardly, lack these qualifications, and will be shown at the last day to have been “in no wise partakers of Christ”—to have had neither part nor lot in the matter of grace and salvation. But in order to make the analogy complete, must not a formal invitation be issued, and must there not be an official conveyance of the invitation ? Now who is the person, whose part it is officially to convey it ? Surely he who is the minister of Christ, and steward of the mysteries of God. The Sacraments constitute part of that Divine provision for the wants of the Church, of which the minister is a steward, and which he is set to dispense to the household. He therefore is the servant who is to say officially, “Come ; for all things are now

ready." And this he is directed to say by the words of the Rubric which precedes the Invitation: "*Then shall the Priest say to them that come to receive the holy Communion, Ye that do truly and earnestly,*" &c. &c.

But the Supper of the Lord is not only the miniature of a dispensation present, but the foreshadowing of a dispensation to come. It is designed and adapted to lead forward our thoughts to that Marriage Supper of the Lamb which shall be celebrated, when the Heavenly Bridegroom shall return to lead His bride home, escorted by those who have been patiently waiting for His appearance. That Supper shall be, as no Sacrament here can be, exclusive of all those, the light of whose profession has not been fed by the oil of personal piety, continually preserved in the oil-vessel of the heart. It shall be exclusive of all those who have not on the wedding garment. And it is meet surely that a warning to this effect should be made in the very conveyance of the Invitation to the earthly Supper. An admonition is surely much in place, that those only are invited, the filthy rags of whose natural condition as sinners are covered (by a real faith) with the fine linen, white and clean, of Christ's righteousness. In issuing the Invitation, therefore, the Priest is virtually directed to bid those only who have on the wedding garment,—those who "truly and earnestly repent them of their sins, and are in love and charity with their neighbours, and intend to lead a new life," and moreover, and above all, who "draw near with faith."

Thus it is clear that, were we to strike out this Invitation, we should lose a Scriptural and valuable feature of the Service—a feature, moreover, which is essential to the-completeness of the idea of the Ordinance; for never yet was there an entertainment, without a summoning of guests by formal invitation.

And we should lose a primitive feature also. In the Liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem, the deacon addressed the people thus before Communion: "Draw near with the fear of God, with faith, and charity"—

a briefer form, of which ours is an expansion. And in the Apostolic Constitutions, and the writings of the early Fathers, similar invitations are either directly mentioned, or it is implied that they were made.

It will be observed, in studying this short Invitation, that the qualifications specified are not all put on the same footing. To one of them, which is faith, a prominence is assigned: "Ye who have repentance, charity, holy intentions, draw near *with faith*." This is very significant: for faith is *the principle by which alone we can draw near*, rather than a mere qualification. The approach must be made in faith, with faith, by faith, if it is to be a real approach at all.

I. The first qualification stated is repentance; and its necessary characteristics are that it shall be true (or sincere) and earnest. Better words could not have been chosen. Our concern for the sins, which Self-examination has brought to light, must be a real concern. It is not said that it shall be passionate, or vehemently excite the feelings (for this passionateness of grief is not competent to all characters, and indeed is sometimes found in characters of the least depth), but that it shall be true. And its truth, of course, will be most satisfactorily evinced by the abandonment of the sin, for which the concern is felt. Yet let me remark that there should be a tenderness in the Christian's sorrow for sin, which no review of the sin itself, no mere moral considerations of its evil and danger, will ever produce. The only specific for throwing this element of tenderness into our repentance is a devout contemplation of the Cross of Christ, and of the Love displayed therein, with the prayer that we may be enabled to mourn for Him whom our sins have pierced. And since this Ordinance commemorates and represents the Cross of Christ, a repentance of this sort is peculiarly appropriate in the communicant.

II. The next qualification is love, or charity with our neighbours, according to the wide acceptation,

which our Lord has given to the word 'neighbour,' in His parable of the good Samaritan,—every one, however estranged from us by prejudices and difference of associations, across whose path we are thrown by Divine Providence. It is observable, that love is a special requirement in them who come to the Lord's Supper, over and above those requirements, which are made of persons to be baptized. By the first Sacrament we are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's Church, before which admission we could know nothing of brotherly love or the Communion of Saints. But after that admission, and as a preparative for the higher Sacrament, we must exercise the graces which are involved in Christian fellowship. It should be remembered that the Lord's Supper is a Festival, not only commemorative of the Love of Christ, but significant also of the love which Christians should entertain towards one another. "For we being many," says St. Paul in reference to this Sacrament, "are one bread" (one loaf), "and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread;" that is, "By partaking all of us of one and the same Eucharistic loaf (the representative and the vehicle of the Body of Christ) we become one body." Surely it were profanation, it were to come in a spirit discordant with the whole tenour of the Ordinance,—if we were to nourish ill-will or enmity in our hearts, while we approach the Lord's Table. Has not Our Lord, though He may not be speaking in the first instance of the Christian Altar, implicitly and in principle forbidden all such approach, when He lays down as a law for His followers in the Sermon on the Mount: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift"? We shall find it a great security for the fulfilment of this precept, if, before communicating, we make it a practice to intercede earnestly for any who may have offended, or wounded, or thwarted us, and, placing ourselves by an effort of mind in their position,

to regard their conduct from their point of view instead of from our own.

III. The next qualification specified is a pure and guileless intention,—a readiness in the will to part with all that is wrong, to adopt whatever a conscience enlightened by God's Word may point out to be right. There must be no reserves from God,—no secret refusal in any corner of the heart to go the full length of His claims. The former requirements were that *the affections* should be in a right state, first towards our crucified Redeemer, then towards man; the present is that *the will* should be in a right state before the heart-searching God. While, on the one hand, we must say that the intention to lead a new life is by no means equivalent to a promise never to sin again (which would be rash in the extreme, for we may be surprised into any sin), on the other, there is no doubt that a serious intention to keep the Commandments of God will, in proportion to its seriousness, *secure* the better keeping of them. We have very instructive proverbs, which we may apply to this subject, both on the general failure of good intentions (a failure arising from their indeterminateness, want of point, want of earnestness, in a word, from their never being good intentions at all, but merely good *wishes*), and also to the effect that, where there is a real honest and earnest intention, such as we call a *will*, there some way is always found of carrying it into effect.

The above, then, are the dispositions of mind and heart, which are suitable to, and of a piece with, the great solemnity which we are about to observe. They constitute therefore the wedding garment; for what is a wedding garment, but a garment in keeping with the occasion of a wedding,—a garment whose colour and beauty matches with the festivity? In this garment we must come arrayed, the Invitation tells us, if we would be received as welcome guests.

But then it passes on to the principle, under the operation of which alone we can draw nigh. "Draw



near with faith." Without faith there is no possibility of drawing near in such a manner as to partake of Christ, or derive His virtue into our souls. If it be asked, what is the object of this faith, we may reply, in the words of our Church, "a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ," "a full trust in God's mercy," such as may engender a quiet conscience. We must believe in that mercy as applicable and extended to ourselves, and to the particular sins of which our own conscience accuses us. And the belief must be in a present forgiveness now bestowed, and must not sink down into a mere nerveless hope of future acceptance. And, again, we must exercise faith in respect of the especial blessings of the Ordinance,—union with Christ and participation of His Body and Blood. Our faith must see Him underlying the elements, and offering Himself to us in all the precious virtues of His mediatorial Work. We must believe that through the Ordinance we ourselves become as closely united with Him in spirit, as the Bread and Wine become united with, and indistinguishable from, the substance of our bodies; and that thus we ourselves become living and breathing Sacraments of Christ, bearing Him about within us, and expressing and representing Him in our lives. Without at all events some amount of this faith, there is no possibility of an inward and spiritual communion with Him. There may be a corporeal, but there is no spiritual access. We may resemble the multitudes, who thronged Him and pressed Him by an outward contact, but not the poor woman who, through the simple touch of His raiment, drew into her afflicted frame the healing virtue of which she stood in need. And when at the last day we plead before Him, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets," He will not recognize us as ever having had with Him any real intercourse; He will turn upon us, as strangers and aliens, with the words, "I tell you I never knew you; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

The Invitation which we have now considered, and the Exhortation which precedes it, are most integral parts of the Office, inasmuch as they bring out into such sharp relief the internal qualifications required in Communicants. Here, as in most other departments of Theology, there are two opposite errors, equally avoided by our Church; of which, in concluding this Chapter, we may say a word. There are those then,—and they are a numerous class of religionists,—who see God in nothing external to their own minds. If such persons would speak out their meaning bravely, and carry out their principles to their logical results, they would say that sacredness and sanctity there is none, except in the heart;—that an Ordinance has no sacredness, except so far as man is conscious of receiving from it a sensible spiritual benefit. Thus, in Public Worship, such persons would say, there is no Presence of Christ, unless we realize it. He has said, indeed, that “where two or three are gathered together in” His “name, there” is He “in the midst of them;” but by this can be meant nothing more than that He is present to our apprehensions; it is the action of our minds, not the celebration of the Ordinance, which draws Him down into the midst of us. On the same principles such persons would say, “There is no sacredness in the consecrated elements in themselves; apart from the receivers they are nothing; our faith it is which makes them the Body and Blood of Christ to us, and not any act external to our minds which passes upon them.”

But what saith the Scripture? “The cup of blessing *which we bless*, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread *which we break*, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”

And what saith the Book of Common Prayer? “Sanctify *this water* to the mystical washing away of sin.” “If the consecrated Bread and Wine be all spent, before all have communicated, the Priest is to *consecrate more*, according to the form before prescribed.” Why to consecrate more?—why to consecrate any, if Consecration does nothing; if the faith of the recipient wou

make unconsecrated Bread and Wine equally available and effective? The tendency of this error is to place the whole of religion in the shifting frames and feelings of the soul; to turn the eye exclusively inward, and to foster a wretched introspection; to hinder man from walking abroad freely in the sunlight of Christian privilege, and among the great objective realities of the Kingdom of God.

But there is another, and at least equally fatal, error on the other side. In contemplating God's Ordinances, we may look wholly at the Institution, at the external observance, and dwell upon it until we allow it to engross the whole field of view, and put out of sight altogether the state of mind in which it is to be approached. The Ordinance, according to this view (and it is the view of all Romanizing Theology), becomes a spell or charm, which acts upon us independently of our giving our mind to it; and a sort of system of magic is set up in the Church of Christ, which quite deprives the Institution of the character of a reasonable service. The monstrous absurdity of such a view is shown in the strongest light by some of those frivolous questions which Romanist Theologians, pursuing their theory to its just conclusions, ask in their books of Casuistry; for example, "Would an animal,<sup>1</sup> partaking by an accident of the Host or consecrated wafer, become partaker of the Body of Christ?" The very fact of such a question being raised shows surely to common sense and common reverence, that they who raise it must be altogether on the wrong scent. To come across such a difficulty at all, they must have erred from sound Reason and Scriptural Truth. An animal has not that immortal spirit, by which alone man is enabled to hold communion with his Creator. To apprehend God, there must be reason; and accordingly the lower creatures, being devoid of reason, cannot apprehend God. This is of course an extreme form of error; but it is clear that any

<sup>1</sup> The question was actually put to Anne Askew by "the Quest" in 1545, "whether, if a mouse should eat the consecrated wafer, he received God or no."

approach to such a conclusion must be wrong. Suppose a man imbruted by sensuality,—one who had reduced himself by indulgence of the animal appetites to the level of the beasts that perish,—such an one, it is clear, could not apprehend Christ, nor become partaker of His Body. There may be in him the spiritual faculty; but it is latent, undeveloped, almost extinct. Then the question arises, “What kind and amount of development must there be in the spiritual faculty to ensure the blessing of the Ordinance to the recipient?” And the only answer to be given to this is that which our Church has given. There must be penitence, real and genuine, if not passionate. To celebrate Christ crucified with a heart of stone, what a profanation must it be!—There must be love. To celebrate the feast of Love with any portion of rancorous feeling, what an awful discordance between the outward and the inward!—There must be holy intentions. To profess self-surrender to a Crucified Saviour without integrity, what a frightful hypocrisy! And, finally, there must be the faculty which realizes things unseen. To regard the elements as so much natural food, and not to discern by faith the Lord’s Body lying beneath them, would evidently be to frustrate the Ordinance altogether! We have indeed no warrant for prescribing the *amount* of these inward qualifications. We doubt not that where they really exist, there the blessing of the Ordinance is in a degree realized, even though a far greater measure of them might be desirable. And we cannot doubt also that, the more we grow in these dispositions, the more fruit shall we gather from this holy Ordinance, and the more shall we experience the blessedness of it. A lifeless body has no power of assimilating food. A feeble living body can only assimilate a little, administered by degrees. But a body with the pulses of life beating strong and quick within it, a hungry and a craving body, can assimilate it thoroughly and easily, and grow thereby. And the soul resembles the body. With a feeble spiritual pulse we can apprehend Christ but feebly in

the Holy Communion : but if there be a strong hunger and thirst after righteousness, a strong craving for the Bread of Life, a strong sense of spiritual poverty and indigence, a strong resolve formed in reliance on God's grace, a strong faith which pierces the veil of things sensible and material, great will then be the comfort received from this Holy Communion, and in the strength of that meat we shall go forward, like Elijah of old, to the mount of God, the end and goal of our pilgrimage.

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## CHAPTER III

### *OF THE CONFESSION*

“ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”—I JOHN i. 9

**M**AN was made, we are told, originally in the image of God ; and, although man be fallen, there are still certain echoes in his nature, and in his dealings with his fellow-man, of the divine perfections. These echoes are recognised in some of our Lord's Parables, and are indeed the basis of the similitude. What other foundation have the Parables of the Friend at Midnight, the Unjust Judge, the Unmerciful Servant, the Prodigal Son, but the truth that God will deal with us much as we deal with one another ; being won by our importunity, roused to anger by our harsh dealing with others, and moved to welcome us back to His arms on the first movement of a true repentance ?

Now among the features of a better mind in man, which have survived the great moral wreck of the Fall, is this, that we are always disposed to relent towards an offender who ingenuously confesses his fault, and takes upon himself the whole shame and blame of it. That man's heart is unnaturally and exceptionally hard, who,

when another says to him, "I have injured you deeply, and I have nothing to say in my own defence; I throw myself upon your goodness and forbearance; forgive this great wrong,"—can spurn away the suppliant, and refuse to look indulgently upon him. Now this feature of the human character is a dim reflection of the infinite compassionateness towards penitent sinners which there is in the heart of God, in virtue of which, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

But then it must be remembered that God, inasmuch as He is a searcher of the thoughts and intents of the heart, does not accept as confession, as we are obliged to do, the mere acknowledgment of the mouth. And confession of sin with the heart is by no means so easy a thing as we are apt to imagine. The mere telling forth our faults presents little or no difficulty. What is so difficult—so impossible, except by divine grace—is the honestly taking to ourselves the full blame and shame of them. In the moment of the Fall, the principle of self-love acquired in the human mind the most exaggerated dimensions; it ceased to be a just and proper self-love, and became self-partiality of the grossest kind. And to stand clear of this self-partiality in estimating our faults is, in fact, the hardest moral task we can set ourselves. Our present mental constitution resembles in this respect our physical. Persons afflicted with cancer, or similar complaints, are not themselves sensible of the loathsomeness and offensiveness of the disease; it is to them endurable, though it is eating into their vitals; whereas others can hardly be in their neighbourhood without a sensation of nausea. And bosom sins have a similar property of inoffensiveness to their possessor,—to the very person in whose nature they are a great gangrene. The man cannot, except by special grace, stand apart from himself, and judge his bosom sin as he would judge it in another. We see accordingly that the first indication of the Fall of man was his making excuses for what he had done,—the exceeding reluctance to acknowledge

the freedom of his own will, and therefore the fulness of his own fault, in the eating of the forbidden fruit. Adam, when expostulated with, shifts the blame to his partner; while at the same time he does not hesitate to bring in God Himself as partly guilty: "The woman, whom *Thou gavest* to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." The woman, when she is referred to, traces the guilt up to the serpent: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." Marvellously life-like representation of the way in which their descendants have always cloaked their faults, when God has expostulated with them in the inner man. Do we not all make for ourselves excuses precisely similar? Sometimes we secretly whisper to our own conscience; "The passions are so much stronger in me than in my neighbour." Sometimes (forgetting that different positions have different temptations of their own); "My circumstances are so peculiarly trying." Sometimes; "It was society which drew me into this sin." While we sometimes quarrel with (or at least murmur against) our Creator in the true spirit of Adam: "Why has He surrounded me with such an atmosphere of temptation? Why has He so strictly prescribed virtue, and yet made the attainment of it so difficult? If I throw temptation in the way of others, I am blameworthy, and consider myself so. Why does God put me providentially in harm's way, and then find fault?" And all this time, while we are thus reasoning, we fancy ourselves conscious of great rectitude of intention, even in the face of all facts. That is a profound saying of the wise man's; "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes." Not that sinners can sin without many checks and hindrances from an accusing conscience. But these checks and hindrances do not interfere with their favourable estimate of their own character. Even when their conduct is admitted to be faulty, they are still on good terms with themselves. The man who has committed the most atrocious crimes, never thinks himself a demon, though all the world may so esteem him. The truth is, that the human will never can accept evil

as evil, without first tricking it out in the colours of good. And having accepted it, it stills clings to these colours, and makes the most of them.

There is one certain indication of the exceeding difficulty of lying low in our own eyes, which I cannot refrain from adverting to. It is our wonderful reluctance to lie low in the eyes of others. If we really thought ill of ourselves, we should be quite willing that others should think ill of us: for surely it is not in our nature to be angry with persons for agreeing with our own sentiments. On the contrary, we are apt to be favourably disposed towards those who view matters in the same light as ourselves. If, therefore, we should find ourselves inwardly displeased with persons who take a very low moral estimate of our character and conduct, this shows very conclusively that we ourselves, however humble our language may be, do not really take the same estimate. If self-esteem were really killed within us by the perception of our sins, we should not be unjust enough to feel irritation towards those, who withhold from us *their* esteem. But when *will* self-esteem be dead in any of us? Test its amount of deadness in yourself by considering how you would feel if called upon to confess to a fellow-creature the worst action of your life; or merely the worst omission of duty, with all its aggravations, its meanness, pettiness, and all the details of the sin. What contrivances would there be, as the revelation startled him to whom it was made, to regain the esteem which you perceive is drawing off from you like a receding tide! How would you try to escape, by every means in your power, from lying before him in the nakedness of your shame! How would you weave into the confession certain good deeds as a set-off, and feel bound in candour (so you would put it to yourself) to mention all extenuating circumstances! Even while making known your guilt, how would you be plotting and planning for reinstatement in his good opinion, and nourishing the secret hope that your confession might give you in his eyes a character for humility! Why is this, but because in



your heart of hearts you really do not think ill of yourself,—because your sin, however grievous it may be in the abstract view of it, has not at all destroyed your self-complacency ?

Now a confession in which there is no mortification of self-complacency,—in which the sinner does not lie low in his own eyes, though he may express himself to that effect, is no confession in the eyes of God. But on the other hand, whenever there is a real self-abasement in the inner man, a real willingness to take upon ourself the blame and shame of sin, a readiness to consent to its exposure before all the world, if God's love and grace could be magnified thereby,—there God deals with us, in consideration of Christ's finished work, much on the same principle (though of course on a much larger scale of compassionateness) as we should deal with an offending brother, who, throwing himself on his knees before us, should confess an injury, and implore our forgiveness.

Into these reflections we are led by the history and the contents of the Confession in the Communion Service. It is by no means a new feature of the Service,—confession (sometimes reciprocal, of the priest to the people, and of the people to the priest) having formed a part of several early Liturgies ; but our own form of Confession is derived from a contemporary work consulted by our Reformers, called “The Simple and Religious Consultation of Hermann, Archbishop of Cologne.” In modifying this form, which they substituted for the meagre confession common in the mediæval Church (borrowing, however, from this last the threefold division of sins into “thought, word, and deed”), they have shown great skill and judgment. A passage in which the corruption of our nature was confessed in strong terms : “We acknowledge and we lament that we were conceived and born in sins (and that therefore we be prone to all evils, and abhor from all good things),” they have altogether omitted. And this is the more remarkable, because at the final revi-

sion of the Liturgy in 1661, it was a point objected to the Confessions by the Presbyterian divines, that they were "too general, and *did not contain sufficient reference to original sin.*" The history of this Confession shows that this omission (or we should rather say this subdued allusion to original sin) was more or less by design. And for this design two reasons may be alleged, both which probably had a measure of weight with the compilers. First, it has been the constant doctrine of the Church, that the guilt of original sin is washed away (not its power removed) by the Sacrament of Baptism. "The fault and corruption of our nature which doth remain, even in them that are regenerated," as well as the actual sins of a penitent and believing adult, are forgiven in the "one Baptism," which is "for the remission of sins." Now our Confessions are of course designed only for the use of the baptized; and on that ground the reference in them to a guilt already obliterated is less marked than might have been expected. The Bishops, in their defence of these Confessions, and in reply to the Presbyterians, expressly say: "It is an evil custom, springing from false doctrine, to use expressions which may lead people to think that original sin is not forgiven in holy Baptism: yet original sin is clearly acknowledged in confessing that the desires of our own hearts render us miserable by following them," &c.—But, secondly, our excellent Reformers designed these prayers to be a personal confession of the sins, of which each member of the congregation felt himself guilty. To allege the depravity of our nature before God (however true) might seem to offer some excuse for our actual sins. Such an excuse is one out of the many, by which man in the court of conscience cloaks his sin to himself. "I was born with this strong bias to evil," is just one of the pleas by which the guilt of sin is continually evaded. Our Reformers did not wish to suggest any such plea to the penitent. He was to be taught to take upon himself the full responsibility of his own actions. Notwithstanding all the bias of evil inclina-

tions, his will has been perfectly free throughout his whole career of evil. His own consciousness furnishes the best proof of this. Am I not conscious that, if I please, I can arouse my will, when temptation is offered, to resist it? that I can bring before my mind the arguments, and apply to my own will the motives, which persuade to and prompt resistance? And this being the case, is there any real excuse to be found for me in the strength of evil inclinations, more especially when to me, a Christian, God has all along proffered the assistances of His grace? So that the more I look at my own personal identification of myself with the sin of Adam, and the less at my inbred depravity, the more likely is my humiliation to be real.

As regards the contents of this Confession, it is instructive to compare them with those of the form in the daily Morning and Evening Prayer. They who do so will not fail to perceive how much deeper is the tone of humiliation in the Prayer before us. To specify some particulars. God is here addressed as "the Judge of all men," a feature of the Divine character which is not brought out in the ordinary Confession. The sins confessed are designated by the strong term "wickedness." Not content with the simple setting them forth, we hint at their aggravation in the words "which we from time to time *most grievously* have committed." They are alleged to have been "in thought," as well as in word and deed. They are said "most justly to provoke God's wrath and indignation against us." We profess the very memory of them to be "grievous unto us, the burden of them to be intolerable." And, finally, we emphasize the cry for mercy by twice repeating it: "Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father." There can be no question that the daily Confession implies much less of a lively concern for sin, much less profound abasement. And there is a great lesson here, which we shall do well not to overlook. Our Blessed Lord, in His solemn words to St. Peter, recognises two sorts of spiritual cleansing; one total, and

of the entire person, the other partial, and needing to be daily renewed: "He that is washed" (it should be, "that is bathed,"—whose whole person is washed) "needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." We may apply this passage to illustrate the distinction in tone between these two Confessions. There are sins of infirmity,—dust which we collect upon our feet during our walk through the world, and which needs to be daily wiped off by confession, and by seeking fresh pardon through Christ's Blood. The daily Confession, then, is for the washing of this dust from the feet. But more solemn periods of humiliation are desirable, when we may review with stricter scrutiny a larger period of our career, and marking how stained with sin the whole of it is, and how even "our righteousnesses" have been "as filthy rags,"—how "our repentance needs to be repented of, and the tears which we shed for sin to be washed over again in the Blood of Christ,"—may abase ourselves more deeply in God's sight. And when shall these periods rather be, than before we draw near to the Holy Table, to communicate with our Lord's Passion, and to partake of remission of sins, and all the other fruits of it? Approaches to God, which merely bring us into His Presence, without uniting us to Him, need not so deep a humiliation. But in proportion to the nearness of the approach (and in the Lord's Supper we have the nearest approach which it is possible to have on earth) must be the depth of our abasement. Were we to see Christ without a veil, as the holiest saints have sometimes been privileged to see Him, and as we shall all see Him in the future state, we should fall at His feet as dead, as did the beloved Apostle in Patmos; we should exclaim, with the Prophet Isaiah, when he saw His glory, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;" we should answer, with Thomas, when convicted by the sight of the sacred wounds, "My Lord and my God." And when we are about to see Christ under a veil, as the Lamb which

has been slain, but who is now alive again, and ready to communicate Himself to, and to identify Himself with, every penitent and believing soul, should not this wonderful condescension work in us a feeling akin to that expressed by Job: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

The Confession at the Communion gives utterance to such a feeling. Perhaps no communicants realize its terms to their full extent. But this is certain, that the more we realize them, the more deeply we sympathize with the thoughts which that language conveys, the larger will be the blessing which we derive from the Ordinance. For what is it which prevents our minds from being filled with God? Is it not the amount of space which self occupies in them? If then, by grace bestowed in answer to earnest Prayer, the mind be emptied of self;—if self-complacency be turned into self-abhorrence, and self-confidence give place to self-distrust,—then the way of Christ is prepared in the soul, and He will enter in, and dwell there, and fulfil to us that most gracious promise, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

## CHAPTER IV

### *OF MINISTERIAL ABSOLUTION*

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."—JOHN XX.  
21-23

**I**N these words Our Blessed Lord, at His first interview with them after His Resurrection, conveyed to

His Apostles the power of remitting and retaining sins. The risen Saviour brings this power with Him as the first-fruits of His Death and Passion. That Death had purchased forgiveness; His Blood was “shed for many *for the remission of sins.*” And, accordingly, the Blood having been shed, the power of remission is lodged at once, on the very Resurrection Day, in the hands of the Apostles. It is observable that the bestowal of this power is not delayed till Pentecost, when the Eleven were fully qualified for their mission. And the circumstance may perhaps be designed to teach us that there is a distinction (which has been always recognised by the Reformed Churches) between justification (or the acquittal of a sinner) and sanctification (or his being made holy); that the one precedes the other in point of time; that not until a sinner has been forgiven, can his sanctification commence.

We have now arrived, in our consideration of the Communion Service, at the precatory Absolution, which succeeds the Confession. But we cannot treat this prayer satisfactorily, unless we go to the root of the matter, and consider the power of Absolution generally, both in its Scriptural grounds, and in the forms which it takes in our own Communion. And this will necessarily occupy more than one Chapter.

We will first, then, seek to understand this power, as lodged in the hands of, and exercised by, the Apostles.

Many things said by Our Lord to His Apostles were addressed to them as private Christians, having no official character or peculiar prerogative. Examples of such words, which we may all take to ourselves, are,—“If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.” “Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” “Watch; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh.”

Other things were said to them, as men who occupied

a peculiar position, which no other men did, and none other can, occupy,—words which are obviously for them, and for them alone. Instances are: “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” “The Holy Ghost shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” “Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Finally, some things which are said to them, are addressed to them in their official capacity, as representatives of the Christian Ministry to the end of time. I will quote one such word: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, *I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*” The Apostles, however, did not live (and Our Lord must have known that they would not live) to the end of the world, which shows us that He was speaking to them not as individuals, but as representatives of those, who to the end of the world should hold His commission to baptize, and to give Christian instruction. And it will not be denied that this commission is held by Christian Ministers only, and not by the laity.

The first point necessary for the understanding of Our Lord’s words in the passage before us is to inquire under what capacity it is that He is addressing His Apostles. For if it is in the second capacity, as those who had been associated with Him in His temptations,—as those who had companied with Him during the period of His earthly pilgrimage, and thus were competent witnesses to the world of His Resurrection, in that case we have no practical concern at all with the power of Absolution, however reasonably we may feel

an interest of curiosity in it. If the power expired with the Apostles, it would not conduce any more to our spiritual welfare to know what it was, or what it did for mankind, than it would to understand the nature of the gift of tongues.

Now that Our Lord did not speak these solemn words to the Eleven, as representing private Christians, may be gathered first from the context, which points very clearly to their true application: "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as *my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.* And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." It is clear that the power of remitting and retaining sins is conferred on the persons who had received the mission; that the power and the mission are not to be disjoined. And what then is this mission? It cannot be doubted that it is the same as that recorded by (and which we have already had occasion to quote from) St. Matthew, a mission to go into all the world, and make disciples by baptism and Christian teaching. Our Lord Himself had come on this mission, having been sent by the Father. He had preached in every synagogue, in the Temple, and under the canopy of the sky, the Kingdom of God. By this preaching He had made and baptized (though not with His own hands) "more disciples than John." And now He sends His delegates on the same mission,—a mission not confined (as formerly) to Judæa, but extending to the whole world. But if this be the mission, it is not one which has descended to private Christians. Therefore neither has the power of remitting and retaining sins, which is associated with it.

Again; that these words were not addressed to the Apostles exclusively, and as persons occupying a peculiar position, which can be held by none other, may be gathered from the nature of the power conferred. It is not a miraculous gift which is here bestowed, in which case we should of course think it an endowment



limited to the Apostolic age. It is not a power, the necessity of which has ceased, or ever will cease, until sin is exterminated. It is the power of remitting sins ; as much called for surely in one age as in another. Surely this power is as essential to the health and well-being of souls, in whatever age they are brought out into existence, as the power to preach, and teach, and administer the Sacraments ; and being so, it must continue with the Church, as the Saviour's Presence does, "even to the end of the world." For it is absurd to suppose that the death of the Apostles should cut off the entail of an inheritance, purchased by the Lord's Death not for them alone, but for all those who should believe on Him through their word. No ! assuredly these keys of the Kingdom of Heaven have passed down from the Apostles into the custody of those, who have truly inherited the Apostles' Ministry in its ordinary powers. And that such is the view taken by our Church is clear from the fact that Our Lord's words in the text are repeated at the Ordination of every Priest, the formula of which runs thus : "Receive the holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the Imposition of our hands. *Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven ; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.*" But unless the power of Absolution still abide substantially with the Christian Ministry, such use of these words must surely be presumptuous in a high degree, even to the verge of blasphemy.

Now there is but one qualification of what has been said, which requires to be taken into account. It is this. Though the power of Absolution did not attach exclusively to the Ministers of the primitive, as distinct from those of the modern, Church,—there was in the<sup>3</sup> Apostolic Church a miraculous power, *which greatly helped the Minister in the right exercise of Absolution.* This power was called "the discerning of spirits ;" and in virtue of it, the holy Apostles, and some of those on whom they laid hands, were enabled on occasions to read the heart, and discern the true character of the

persons with whom they had to deal. They were not dependent on a man's profession of penitence and faith for a knowledge of his state of mind ; but they read penitence and faith, impenitence and unbelief, by a miraculous intuition. Now it is evident that, in the whole administration of their absolving power, this discernment of spirits must have greatly helped them, specially where it was to be exercised towards individuals. For if a man has not repentance and faith, he has no receptivity for, no capacity of profiting by, Absolution, or Baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or the Benediction of the Church, and should accordingly be excluded from them. And, accordingly, the power of seeing infallibly whether men had these graces or had them not, must have been an assistance to the Apostles in enabling them to absolve or retain sins aright, and according to the mind of God. They could not make a mistake as to the characters which were receptive of, and prepared for, Absolution. And this may make, and justly does make, a difference between them and modern Ministers : the amount of which is this, that modern Ministers must exercise the great function (at all events towards individuals) with a caution, and a reserve, and a deliberateness, very much greater than was required in the Apostles. The power may be exactly the same ; but there is not now the same discretion to regulate its use. Let me give an illustration, which may simplify the idea to some minds. A rich man leaves a large sum of money in the hands of trustees, directing that they shall use it for the relief of distress, and giving them powers to fill up vacancies in their body, when such arise. The original trustees are men thoroughly conversant with charities, who know every petitioner for relief that is not really a deserving object of it, and to whom long experience among the poor has given a sagacity which seldom errs or fails. By and by, however, the trustees are replaced by others, who have no knowledge of the world and its ways, and are apt to be imposed upon by the first tale of distress. Now to these latter trustees it would be right and

necessary to say: "You must be exceedingly cautious in the administration of this bequest, lest you should do more harm than good, contravene the testator's intention, and, instead of relieving distress, encourage indolence and dependence, and so multiply pauperism. Indeed, might it not be well for you scarcely ever to give to individuals, but rather to administer the relief indirectly, yet not less efficiently, through the medium of Hospitals, Dispensaries, or Mendicity Societies? At all events, let the direct application of your funds to the individual be the exception, not the rule."—Now this is the very way (as far as it can be exhibited in a figure) in which the Church of England directs her Clergy to administer the treasure of Absolution, which she believes to have come down to them, as the purchase of the Master's Blood. The power is fully and emphatically recognised in the Ordination Service, in the Morning and Evening Prayer, and in the Communion Service. But the usual forms in which it is exercised are public; because here the exercise is safe and guarded. The Absolution is declared to be for those only who repent and believe, and with this proviso is flung abroad on the Congregation at large, to find those whom it ought to find. As for private and individual Absolutions, without for a moment saying they are never to be pronounced, our Church is judiciously chary of them. The circumstances under which they may be sought are indicated as exceptional, not normal. If any man cannot quiet his own conscience before coming to the Holy Communion, he is directed to come to some "discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution." And, again, if a dying man (a man placed in front of eternity cannot well be insincere in his professions) feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, our Church prescribes that he shall be moved to make a special Confession of his sins, "after which Confession the Priest shall absolve him, if he humbly and heartily desire it." Thus the Church

makes no doubt of the existence of the power of Absolution; but she guards it jealously from abuse, as knowing that there is not always the discretion necessary for its right exercise.

But in order fully to understand this power of remitting and retaining sins, as it was conferred upon the Apostles, we must look at it in its exercise as well as in its bestowal. St. Peter, then, retained the sins of Ananias and Sapphira, when he denounced their hypocrisy, and predicted their punishment. In this earliest exercise of the power, we see the miraculous gift of discerning spirits assisting the Apostle in the administration of it. The gift is no more; and temporal judgments no longer ratify the sentences of the Church; but this does not affect her possession of the power. Suppose a Christian Minister coming in a natural way to the knowledge of some grievous sin in some member of his flock, and representing to him faithfully its heinousness, and the impossibility of pardon without repentance; suppose, to take a definite case, that "perceiving malice and hatred to reign" between two members of the Church, he should remonstrate with them on that state of mind, and, as our Communion Office bids him, should debar such persons from the Lord's Table until he knew them to be reconciled,—this would be the retention of sins in its modern and unmiraculous form, and there can be no doubt that the judgment so passed (I am assuming it to be in all respects equitable) would be ratified from on high.

The dealing of St. Peter with Simon Magus is another instance of the retention of sins. The iniquity of the sinner's heart was in this case manifest from the iniquity of his proposal; and St. Peter meets it by a sharp rebuke, holding out to him, however, the hope of God's forgiveness on condition of repentance. Simon, overwhelmed by the force of the reproof, requests the prayers of the Apostles that "none of these things which ye have spoken may come upon me." There was an evident and just fear in his mind that God might ratify this sentence supernaturally, as He had

done that upon Ananias and Sapphira, and also a persuasion that the prayers of the Apostles might avail to avert the consequences. Pastoral rebuke, then, of evident and obvious sins is an exercise of the keys, and of the power of retention ;—and it is an exercise which this age needs ; for there can be no doubt that, what with the wish to retain our congregations at all hazards, the fear of giving offence and of driving some into schism, and the desire to be personally well spoken of, ministerial faithfulness is at a low ebb amongst us, and it seems as if those words had been erased from our Commission,—“ *Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.*”

St. Paul’s vehement denunciation of Elymas the sorcerer, and the consequent infliction of blindness upon him, so much resembles the transactions of St. Peter, already commented upon, that we need not make it a distinct subject of remark.

Then we come to St. Paul’s excommunication of the incestuous Corinthian, the delivery of him unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord, and the retractation of that censure, when it had done its work upon the offender, and had brought him to a sincere penitence. The passage has such an important bearing on our present subject, being in short the great Scriptural instance of the bestowal of Absolution, that it must be quoted at length :—

“ Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. . . . To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also : for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ ; lest Satan should get an advantage of us : for we are not ignorant of his devices.”

Lastly, we have the counsel of St. James as to the course of conduct which the sick member of Christ’s

flock should pursue. "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders" (presbyters) "of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and *if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*" Here again the miraculous part of the transaction is of course peculiar to the Apostolic age: the oil has been dropped, as being the sign of an extraordinary cure now no longer vouchsafed; but the prayer of faith offered by the bedside of the sick forms still a part of our Ministry; and who shall say it is ineffective for spiritual healing in the face of those words, "If he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him;" in the face of those still more solemn words of the text, which confer the power of Absolution, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained"?

The whole Ministry of the Apostles was interwoven with miracles, and so far exceptional; yet no one will maintain that the Ministry of the Apostles died with them, though its temporary attributes may have done so. The power of Absolution then, which emanates from the Ministry, cannot so have died, the exercise of it being fully as much needed now as it was in the primitive days.

Yet it must be observed that, in the exercise by the Apostles of the power of remitting and retaining sins, there is no trace whatsoever of the form which the Roman Church has given to Absolution. There is not the smallest vestige of a practice of habitual confession to the Apostles by the members of their Churches, or of a formal Absolution by them. There is not the slightest attempt on their part to usurp any judicial power over the human conscience: so far from it, that St. Peter's counsel to Simon Magus is (not "Come to me for Absolution," but) "Repent of this thy wickedness, and *pray God*, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."

The elders, says St. James, are to *pray over* the sick man, that his sins may be forgiven. Why to pray, unless in acknowledgment that the forgiveness merely passed through them as channels, did not (and could not) originate with them,—that in the absolute and judicial sense, “none can forgive sins but God only”? That men can act otherwise than ministerially in remitting sins is a doctrine as contrary to Holy Scripture as it is to Reason and the teaching of the early Fathers. And to attribute to the Christian Minister the power of Absolution (when thus understood) is not more arrogant than to attribute other spiritual effects to his Ministry. No one denies the spiritual effect of God’s preached Word upon the conscience, nor the spiritual effect of Sacraments, where duly administered and duly received, in strengthening and refreshing the soul. Yet these spiritual effects are in no wise due to the Minister, except as a medium : he cannot, except as an instrument in the hands of God’s Spirit, touch a single conscience or comfort a single soul. The utmost that can be said of him is, that ordinarily (not that God is bound to any means, or that He does not frequently show Himself to be independent of all means) God administers through His ordained servants the stores of His treasury of grace. Why not also the stores of His treasury of forgiveness?

God often converts souls, and edifies them, without any human instrumentality at all. Some dealing of His Providence, some passage of His Word, arrests the conscience of the sinner, and awakens it to righteousness and repentance. The Holy Ghost is as free as the wind, which is His great emblem in nature, and bloweth where He listeth, apart from the instrumentality which He Himself hath ordained. And similarly God can (and doubtless does) forgive sinners independently of His Church, speaking peace to many a conscience on the moment of its coming to Christ. Yet it appears to be no less true that God has ordained an instrumentality in the earth, which He delights to bless and honour ; and that this instrumentality is the

ordinary vehicle, through which mercy and other spiritual blessings reach us. O let us seek at His hand that sound judgment which fairly balances, and gives its due weight to, every testimony of His Word, and that simplicity and honesty of mind which seeks not the establishment of preconceived views, but Truth, and Truth only.

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## CHAPTER V

### *OF THE FORMS IN WHICH THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND DISPENSES ABSOLUTION*

“When he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”—JOHN XX. 22, 23

THE question whether the power of Absolution still resides in the Ministry of the Church will be found very much to resolve itself into the prior question, Whether there is an ordained Ministry of the Church at all? If a man chooses to deny that God hath committed to human Ministers the word of reconciliation; if, while he believes in Christianity, he disbelieves, as many do, in the Christian Society or Church, and resents altogether human intervention between God and the individual conscience, he may be easily confuted from Holy Scripture; but the confutation of him is not our present business. But if a man admits (as it is presumed our readers are disposed to admit) that there is an ordained Ministry, and that this Ministry is the usual, though not the exclusive, channel through which God conveys spiritual blessings, then he grants implicitly the power of Absolution as inherent in that Ministry. No one (at least no mem-



ber of the Reformed Churches) imagines that any man, whatever his ecclesiastical position, can forgive sins absolutely, and as a matter of his own arbitrement. Even the Apostles themselves never claimed to do this. He only can forgive in this manner, against whom the offence is committed; and as God is the Person who in all sin (even in that against our neighbour) is aggrieved, none but He can forgive in the absolute and judicial sense of the word. But if God dispenses forgiveness through certain human instruments, those instruments have derivatively the power of Absolution. And can this method of dispensing forgiveness be denied? If a person burdened with a sense of guilt, and in a state of mental depression, should stray into a church, and there hear the message of free forgiveness and grace through Christ fully and faithfully set forth from the pulpit; if it should there be pointed out to him that what the heavy-laden conscience has to do is not to qualify itself for acceptance with God, but simply come to Christ, and embrace that acceptance which is already purchased by His blood and merit; and if on hearing this glad tidings, he goes away lightened and relieved, having found that joy and peace in believing, which are among the first fruits of the Spirit,—what is this but God's dispensation of forgiveness to that man by the mouth of the Minister? It may not be technically called Absolution; but surely it is Absolution to all intents and purposes; it is as if the Minister, in the Name and by the authority of His Master, had said to that soul, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die."—Suppose another hearer, conscious of still cleaving in his intention to some course which both Scripture and the moral sense condemn, to receive from the pulpit the equally true message that, whatever flatteries the deceitful heart may practise upon us, there is no salvation for sinners obstinately holding by their sins; and after receiving it, to go down to his house heavy and displeased, unable any longer to lay to his soul the flattering unction

that his good impressions or his religious Ordinances make him safe ; what is this but the binding of his sins on the man's conscience, the retention of his sins so far as man can retain them, that is, the declaration that they are retained upon a certain moral condition ?

Again : Baptism is said expressly to be *for the remission of sins* : " Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." " Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." It is an ordained vehicle of remission ; and the administration of it (like that of the other Sacrament) is lodged in the hands of those who inherit the charge given to the Apostles : " Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." If, then, a Christian missionary, after long instruction and probation of a catechumen, has satisfied himself of that person's fitness for Baptism, and administers to him this Holy Sacrament, is not this a virtual absolution of the person who receives the rite,—an absolution which is conveyed under the express commission and authority of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls ? And if, on the other hand, such a missionary should with good reason pronounce the catechumen at present unfit for the Sacrament, should discover in him conduct which impeaches the sincerity of his motive in seeking for Baptism, or should think him too ignorant of fundamental truths to be thus initiated into the school of Christ, and under this impression should say, " I suspend your Baptism for the present ;"—few persons, I apprehend, would question his right and authority to act thus, while many, perhaps, would fail to see what is involved in the action. Surely such a suspension amounts to a retention of sins. For if St. Paul's sins, even after his conversion, could not be washed away, as he was informed, but by Baptism,

how much less can we think that the sins of ordinary persons, whose religious impressions are much weaker than St. Paul's, can be otherwise washed away? To withhold Baptism, then, is to withhold the ordained vehicle of remission, and so virtually to retain sins.— Yet, in the exercise of the above functions, no one regards the Minister as being more than a Minister. The grace of Sacraments, and the grace which makes the Word of God effective for the relief of the conscience, is from God, and from God alone. The Minister can do no more than negotiate the outward part; that is, preach the word faithfully to the ear, or administer rightly and duly the Sacrament. The Holy Ghost alone can communicate with the conscience and inner man; the Minister, as in the Word, so in the Sacraments, is but the Holy Ghost's instrument for reaching the inner man.

The sum of what has been said is, that, if there is an ordained Ministry at all, the remission of sins must transpire, like a fragrant odour, from the exercise of every part of it: must transpire, even when not formally announced, from the preaching of the Word, and the ministration of the Sacraments; and from simply not exercising the Ministry, retention of sins must follow.

But it may be asked, "May not the power of Absolution be exercised alone, independently of any other Ordinance of the Church?" No doubt it may. Provision is made for our Church for such an independent exercise of the power. And it is exercised in two forms, by way of authoritative declaration, and by way of intercession, the latter of which is now more immediately before us, but of both of which we will now say a word.

As to the form, "I absolve thee," in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick (a late introduction, by the way, dating from the twelfth or thirteenth<sup>1</sup> century,

<sup>1</sup> "If it be inquired, when the use of the indicative form of absolution first began to be used in the Church, that is, the form,

whereas all the primitive Absolutions run in the modest style of prayers), it cannot possibly import more than a strong declaration, "I declare thee absolved," and thus falls under the former head.

I. First, in the daily Service, the general Confession is immediately succeeded by "the Absolution or Remission of sins, to be pronounced by the Priest alone, standing; the people still kneeling."

The analysis of this formulary may be given in very few words. First the Divine warrant, which the Minister has for making this solemn declaration, is exhibited to the people, as the ground of what is to follow: "Almighty God . . . . hath given power, and commandment to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins." The official proclamation is then made, that God forgives all who are peni-

'I absolve thee,' instead of the deprecatory form, 'Christ absolve thee;' Morinus has fully proved that there was no use of it till the twelfth or thirteenth century, not long before the time of Thomas Aquinas, who was one of the first that wrote in defence of it, and our learned Bishop Usher has clearly proved the novelty of it from Aquinas himself. For he says, There was a learned man in his time who found fault with the indicative form of absolution then used by the priest, 'I absolve thee from all thy sins,' and would have it to be delivered only by way of deprecation; alleging that this was not only the opinion of Gulielmus Altissiodorensis, Gulielmus Parisiensis, and Hugo Cardinalis, but also that thirty years were scarce passed since all did use this form only, '*Absolutionem et remissionem tribuat tibi Omnipotens Deus*' (Almighty God give thee remission and forgiveness). This points out the time of the change so precisely, that learned men, who allow the form in some sense proper to be used, make no scruple to declare their opinion of the novelty of it upon the strength of the foregoing considerations."—BINGHAM'S *Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 1094.

The phraseology of this form, however, may be Scripturally defended by the words of St. Paul in 2 Cor. ii. 10, "To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes *forgave I it in the person of Christ.*" Also by the language respecting the Levitical priest, who is said to "cleanse the leper," or "make him clean" (Lev. xiv. 11), when all that he did was officially to declare him so by the performance of certain ceremonies.

tent and believing: "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." The Congregation there present are then exhorted to pray that they themselves may come under the terms of the Divine pardon, so that the Service now in performance may be acceptable, the life which shall succeed it pure and holy, and at the end of all, the joy of our Lord: "Wherefore let us beseech him to grant us true repentance, and his holy Spirit, that those things may please him, which we do at this present; and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure, and holy; so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy."

It may be said this is merely a declaration that God pardons us, on condition of our being repentant and believing, and a declaration which any one is at liberty to make. And of course it cannot be disputed either that truth is truth, whoever speaks it, or that, in the intercourse of private life, any true disciple of Christ, without being an ordained Minister, might raise the drooping spirit of another, by pointing him to those evangelical promises, which assure pardon to the penitent and believing, and which the faithfulness of God stands engaged to fulfil. But if to the ordained Minister, and to him alone, is committed the word of reconciliation, the Minister alone can proclaim *with authority* the message of reconciliation. Others may tell it; may point it out in the Scriptures; he alone can *pronounce* it (such is the significant word employed in the Rubric) under the warrant and seal of the Most High. It is one thing that the news of an amnesty granted by a Sovereign to a rebellious but subdued province, should be blazed abroad among the people, find its way into public journals, and become the subject of general conversation, and mutual congratulation,—and quite another that the ambassador should come into the market-place in his robes of state, and there, producing his credentials with the royal seal affixed, should read the terms of the amnesty. The message may have reached the citizens through other channels; but

the ambassador's appearance is a comfortable assurance of its reality. Now the Christian Minister is the ambassador of Christ, according to those words of St. Paul: "Now then we are ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." In the face of the assembled Church, in the theatre of Christian ministrations, he appears publicly as His ambassador. His announcement, under such circumstances, of God's message of forgiveness is no ordinary one, although long habit and familiarity with the words in which it is couched, may have blinded us to the dignity of the transaction. He is for the time being the King's representative, and publishes the amnesty in his official character.

And if any should think lightly of a mere declaration of God's forgiveness, as if this were to assign too poor and tame a meaning to the high-sounding words, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them," let him reflect that the Absolutions, which Our Lord administered while upon earth, were nothing but declarations of God's pardon, though founded (in His case) on His infallible knowledge of the state of the individual. Christ Himself (though of course He might have done so, had He chosen to stand upon the prerogative of His Divine Nature) never at any time said, "I absolve thee." "When he saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" ("have been, and are, forgiven thee," would be the exact rendering of the tense in our modern English; it is a past transaction, continuing in its results, which is announced). And observe that the power thus exercised by the Son of Man, although exercised in the form of a declaration, is described by Himself in the immediately succeeding context as being "power on earth to forgive sins." Again, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for" (the token and evidence of which is that) "she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Now I suppose there is not one of us, whose heart would not leap for joy to hear such a declaration,

though nothing more than a declaration, made respecting ourselves by Christ Our Lord. And why? Because of the infinite dignity of His Person;—because we know and feel that to Him all authority is given in heaven and earth, and that His every word must stand. Now let us make the reflection, that of this authority to declare God's pardon of the penitent, He hath condescended to impart a certain share to His ministering servants; and that though He does not now give them, as He once did, the miraculous power of intuition into moral character, and by withholding this power signifies His will (as was pointed out in the last Chapter) that they should be very cautious in administering Absolution to individuals, and for the most part abstain from doing so altogether; yet the authority to declare forgiveness under the Divine warrant is still theirs; the declaration being now general to all who come under the terms, without any pretence to an insight as to who these may be.

And now one word as to the practical value which this declaratory Absolution of the Morning and Evening Service may have, and ought to have. In various ways, different schools of religionists seek for, and profess to find, an assurance of their forgiveness and acceptance with God. Some represent assurance as being involved in all genuine or saving faith, so that without assurance we have no hold whatever upon God's mercy through Christ. Others, of sounder judgment, think it a privilege extended by God to a few, and perhaps as the recompense of their faithfulness. All would gladly welcome it, if they felt they could have it in God's way, without false confidence or presumption. Some profess to have found assurance in certain passages of Scripture, borne in upon their mind when in a state of religious susceptibility. Some have made a scripture to themselves out of their own sanguine and presumptuous temperament, and have found in ecstasies and raptures of feeling God's token upon them for good. But it will be safe at all events, and to humble souls it may be no less consolatory than safe,

to seek our assurance in some token of Divine appointment. As to the simpler operations of our own minds on religious subjects—whether we with all earnestness cast sin behind our back, and rely only on Christ for the expiation of it—we cannot be much at fault, if the mind is in a healthy state. Then, without any self-tormenting analysis of our motives, let us draw near to the House of God, where morning and evening the golden keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are exhibited for the consolation of penitent sinners. Let us listen intently to the message of God's pardon, pronounced by the lips of His commissioned ambassador. Let us take it to ourselves; if we be penitent and believing, it is ours. It is sent to us in the way of God's Ordinances,—a token upon us for good, surer than frames and feelings, which fluctuate, and better authorized by far than fanciful applications of Scripture to our own case. I doubt whether any assurance, which it is possible to obtain upon earth, will rest upon a much better foundation than that obtained in this way.

II. But it may be asked whether Absolution is simply declarative; whether it does nothing more than assure us, under God's commission, of a forgiveness which has been already granted by Him. Does it, it may be asked, effect nothing, but simply indicate what has been effected? The answer is given by the higher form of Absolution, which is now before us in the Communion Office. This higher form, it will be observed, is a prayer by the Priest on behalf of the people. His office, like the statue of Janus, has two faces, and looks in two directions. When announcing God's will (and the terms of forgiveness and acceptance are to sinners the most important part of His will), he looks towards the people. But he is also set to be an intercessor,—to sum up and present their wants before the Throne of Grace. And in this higher character we see him in the Communion Office, his face turned towards the Lord, supplicating pardon, and all the glorious blessings which follow in the train of pardon, for his flock. Now nothing can be more certain than this, that prayer



is effective,—that in some mysterious manner, which we are totally incapable of understanding, it influences the will of God. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” Moreover, we find intercessory prayer, offered by the chosen servants and messengers of the Most High, recognised, both in the Old and New Testament, as efficacious for those in whose behalf it is offered. Says God to Abimelech respecting Abraham; “He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live.” And again to Job’s friends, respecting Job: “Go to my servant Job; and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept.” And again we find Samuel recognising it as part of his bounden duty to pray for the people: “Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.” Again, we have the notable instance of Elijah’s intercession, which, as St. James informs us, availed first to close, and then to open, the windows of heaven. And again in the New Testament: “Is there any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, *and pray for one another, that ye may be healed.*” And in how very large a majority of his Epistles does St. Paul assure his converts of his prayers for them, in the most forcible and emphatic manner!—Their names are written on his heart, he intimates, as were the names of the literal Israel on the high priest’s breastplate, and he is continually presenting them before God.

Now the intercessory part of the ministerial office, whereby the faithful pastor procures for his flock mercy and other spiritual blessings, is brought out in this precatory Absolution of the Communion Office. And you will observe how perfect the form is, and how much of wholesome doctrine underlies its simple phraseology; how it recognises forgiveness and acceptance as being

not the ultimate achievement of holiness, but the very first steps towards it; how it represents sanctification as being progressive, and grace as eventually merging into glory: "Almighty God, our heavenly Father, . . . . have mercy upon you; pardon" you (this must be done, first, before sin's power can be broken: broken however it must be, for the prayer proceeds) "pardon and *deliver* you from all your sins; confirm and strengthen you in all goodness" (not suffer you to rest in weak beginnings, or to count yourself to have apprehended, when your race only is just begun,) "and bring you to everlasting life" (that is, finish the good work which He has begun in you); "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Absolutions found in the primitive Liturgies run always in the form of Prayer or Benediction; and in some of them there was a reciprocal prayer for the Priest by the people, and for the people by the Priest, which formed a most interesting feature of the Service, and which is nowhere represented in our Liturgy except by the mutual salutation, "The Lord be with you," "And with thy spirit." While we are convinced not only of the sufficiency, but of the excellence of our Offices as they stand, we rather regret the loss of this expression of sympathy and mutual interest between the pastor and his flock. It is, however, a loss which can easily be repaired in private. Let not the Minister limit his intercessions for his flock to the utterance of the prescribed form (though this will be the flower and crown of them), but let him carry those intercessions with him into his closet, and urge them there with that fervour and perseverance which takes no refusal at God's hand; and let his flock do the same for him, and seek to help him at the Throne of Grace in bearing the burden of his trials, and discharging himself of his responsibilities: and then the spirit of the old reciprocal Absolutions would be preserved, even while the letter of them is dropped; and we should soon see a more efficient discharge of the Ministry, arising from an increased desire on the part of the laity to co-operate

with their Ministers in Christian objects, and a more primitive zeal for the conversion of souls in those who wait at the altar.

And when we speak of intercession as available in behalf of one another—whether it be the personal intercession of friends for friends, or the official intercession of the pastor for his flock—let us never forget that, independently of, and apart from, the prayer of the great High Priest for us all, no prayer of man can have any efficacy whatsoever. It is only as united with His Intercession, it is only as taking its stand upon His finished and meritorious work, that any prayer, whether for ourselves or others, can receive an answer, or even gain a hearing. And the intercessory Absolution of which we have been speaking is only an earthly and dim echo of that prayer for His people, which Christ is offering in Heaven, and which, according to the laws of the œconomy of grace, takes up and absorbs into itself, and communicates its own virtue to, the supplications, prayers, and intercessions, which His Church below makes for all men.

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## CHAPTER VI

### *OF THE FOUR COMFORTABLE WORDS*

“ Let us draw near . . . in full assurance of faith.”

HEBREWS x. part of ver. 22

THE fifteen Psalms which immediately succeed the 119th are called Songs of Degrees, or Songs of the Steps. One explanation given of the term is that these Psalms were sung by the Levites, one upon each of the fifteen steps which led from the court of the women to that of the men in the Jewish Temple. We have compared the Communion Office to a venerable Cathedral, having its outer precinct, by which it is approached, in the Lord's Prayer, Collect for Purity, and Decalogue

(which introductory parts of the Office speak of preparation and self-examination), and its Sanctuary or Choir in that more solemn period of the Service which begins with the Tersanctus, and upon which we hope to enter in our next Chapter. The "Comfortable Words" from the mouth of our Saviour Christ, of St. Paul, and of St. John, are our Christian songs of the steps, which we sing as we pass from the Transept into the Choir, to join in the full burst of adoration which awaits us there.

Yes, we are about to join with Angels and Archangels, and all the company of Heaven, in singing the high praise of God. But this it is impossible we should do with a heart full of doubts and misgivings. An uneasy conscience, and a mind that wavers as to its own acceptance, is not in tune for praise. "It is requisite," says the Invitation, "that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience." To impart this full trust, and to assure and render quiet the conscience, is the great object of the Absolution, and of the Comfortable Words which follow it. Of the Absolution first. We pointed out in our last Chapter that one main object of Absolution, the great practical value of it, is the assurance of the penitent and believing sinner. We saw that Absolution was ministered by our Blessed Lord Himself in the form of an assurance: "Thy sins be" (or are) "forgiven thee." Our minds naturally crave after this assurance, and seek it sometimes in frames and feelings, which are conceived to be the inward witness of the Spirit of God, while really they are the signs of nothing more than a sanguine temperament; sometimes in certain texts of Scripture, twisted from their original connexion into a fanciful applicability to our own circumstances. Now, as against these false methods of obtaining it, the Church gives us good and solid grounds of assurance. God has commissioned His ministers officially to intercede for, and authoritatively to declare, forgiveness of sins to the penitent and believing. This ministerial commission then is the first ground of assurance which the Church here advances:

the exercise of it is the first means by which she seeks to quiet the burdened and heavy-laden conscience. And the thread of sentiment which connects the Absolution with that which immediately follows it, is very apparent, at least to one who will not allow his familiarity with our services to deaden his mind to the significance of their various parts. It is as if the Church said to us : " You have heard the prayer offered in your behalf by God's accredited messenger of reconciliation, standing upon his commission, and acting in the Name of his Master ; now then, lest any disquieting doubts should still remain upon your conscience, you shall hear what is better still, the words of Our Saviour Christ, and of those Apostles who spoke infallibly by the inspiration of His Spirit. Christ shall assure you, Paul shall assure you, John shall assure you. Every human Minister has the treasure of the Gospel message in an earthen vessel. He is as full of infirmity, sin, and error, as you are yourself. And though this infirmity and unworthiness does not in the least detract from the efficacy of his ministrations, which ' be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise,' yet the message of mercy and peace conveyed through a purer medium may haply be more satisfactory to thy mind. It shall come to thee then through the purest of all media, the holy and infallible Word of God, the Word which was spoken or written with a full foresight of thy difficulties, trials, and sins, not indeed by the human writer, but by the Spirit who inspired him. In virtue of this perfect foresight, thou mayest reasonably expect to find some word in Holy Scripture specially meeting thy need,—some word, of which thou mayest without presumption or fanaticism conclude that it was designed for thee, and that thou mayest take it to thyself."

Now observe what words are chosen from Holy Scripture for this purpose. They are the broadest and freest evangelical declarations which it is possible to find in the whole volume, those which combine the largest amount of grace with the least amount of qualification

in the persons to whom they are addressed. To use the language of the Seventeenth Article, they are "the promises of God as they are generally set forth in Holy Scripture," as distinct from "the counsel of God, secret to us," the consideration of which would only tend to baffle and disturb weak consciences. Let us look somewhat into the particulars of them.

1. First comes Our Lord's own famous invitation, embracing all who labour and are heavy laden; all, that is, who in any measure feel their sin to be a burden, and sincerely desire deliverance from it. If we have felt the galling of a wounded conscience, the galling of a corrupt nature; nay, if we have been only pressed hard with care and sorrow, and under this pressure truly turn to Christ as the only quarter in which peace and satisfaction is to be had; we come under the terms of this promise, and are at liberty at once to accept it. This is the beautiful song of the first step; and you will observe (for this observation will show the excellent method in which these sentences are arranged) that this first sentence carries us no farther back than to Our Lord Himself: "Come unto *Me* . . . and *I* will give." To use His own image, this is the call of the mother bird to the stray chickens, whereby she invites them to gather themselves under her wings, to be shielded by her from danger, and to be cherished with the vital heat which resides in her body. Not the children of Jerusalem only, but sheep which are not of that fold, shall assuredly feel the glow and warmth of consolation, if at the sound of His Voice they will but betake themselves to that refuge.

2. Our Lord, however, never allowed His disciples to rest in Himself. To Himself He attracted them indeed, but it was to lead them on beyond Himself to the Father. He represented Himself as the Way, the Door (marvellous condescension! a way and a door being nothing in themselves, but in reference to the city or the chamber to which they lead), by which and through which alone access to the Father is to be had. And on one occasion He altogether put out of sight

His own intervention in behalf of His disciples (though that of course we know to have been essential for them), and referred them to the Father's Love as an independent source of the blessings which visited them: "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

So in the second of these admirably chosen sentences Christ takes us back beyond Christ to God, and points out to us the Father's boundless Love as the origin of man's Redemption: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

It would seem as if grace itself could not go beyond this in its freedom, in its comprehensiveness, in the simplicity of its requirements. In the first place, "the world" (*i.e.* all mankind, and not any narrow section of it) is represented as being the object of God's Love. The conscience of the sinner, ingenious often, when in a state of awakened susceptibility, to invent pleas against itself, cannot possibly say, "This word of comfort is not designed for me." If thou art but a man or a woman, it is thine; for, to use the phrase of St. Paul to Titus, it is God's "philanthropy" (or love of the human race) which is here announced by the Saviour. And to any thoughtful reader of His words it will at once suggest itself as a grand additional topic of consolation, that, at the time when God evidenced His Love for the world by the gift of His Son, the world was in a state of rebellion. It was alienated, and an enemy in its mind by wicked works. It lay in wickedness; it was not seeking mercy at God's hand; it was not prostrate before Him in penitence and humiliation; it was defying Him. And no sooner did His Son appear and manifest God's perfections, than the world rose in arms against Him, and did what in it lay to root out the name and the memory of Him from the earth. Yet, despite this malignant hostility on the

part of the world, God's aspect towards it was one of Love,—“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.”

Observe again (for this is another topic of rich consolation) that what God gave in evidence of His Love, was the only thing which could be a sacrifice to Him. If it had been possible that the human soul should have been redeemed by corruptible things, such as silver and gold, that it should have been redeemed by the gift of any creature, or of any aggregate of creatures, God would have been none the poorer for the loss; for in another instant He could have created by the word of His power other worlds, brighter and more beautiful than this. But His Son was a Person in the Divine Nature, whom in His exceeding love to the world He rent from His bosom, and parted with for a while, sending Him down into the pit of our ruin, to gather up and new-create into a vessel of honour the fragments of our shattered humanity.

And finally, observe that all we have to do in order to avail ourselves of this gift is summed up in a single word, “Believe,”—“that whosoever believeth in Him,” &c. The commandment is not far off, nor in heaven, nor in the deep, nor beyond the sea, but very nigh unto us, in our mouth and in our heart, that we may do it. A sincere turning away from sin, and a casting of all the burdens of the conscience on Christ,—this is belief: and “whosoever believeth,” so runs the Comfortable Word, such is the song of the second step, “shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

3. But against all declarations and evidences of God's Love whatsoever a wounded conscience will insist, with much pertinacity, that never yet was sin so great and grievous as its own. An instance therefore will be consolatory, of one who was the chief of sinners having been forgiven. The song therefore of the next step is, “Hear also what St. Paul saith. This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.”

Observe now what manner of sins St. Paul's had



been. They had been sins by which the progress of the Gospel had been obstructed in the minds of others. Those that were entering into the Kingdom of Heaven Saul of Tarsus grievously hindered. He set himself in an attitude of defiant hostility to the Truth which alone can regenerate, sanctify, and save the soul. His hands reeked with the blood of Stephen, and indeed of other martyrs; for he speaks of the murders to which he had been an accessory in the plural number: "*Many of the saints did I shut up in prison,*" . . . . "*and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.*"

It may be, alas! that our influence hitherto has been morally unwholesome to those with whom we have come in contact. It may even be that we have thrown temptation into the way of others, and seduced them into grievous sin. But can we seriously think that the hindrance offered by us to the Truth and Grace of God has been greater than that offered by St. Paul? Have we wrought more mischief in the spiritual world than he? Take into account, too, not merely the insult offered to Our Lord by Saul's high-handed opposition to His Truth, but the wounds and sufferings inflicted upon Him through His members: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Saul could not have inflicted more suffering upon the Lord, had his been the ruthless hands which drove the nails into the extremities of His Sacred Person, or made long furrows with the scourge upon His back. Now, independently of St. Paul's own personal salvation, the Lord had an object, we are told, in forgiving him, which had reference to the future of His Church; "that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Avail thyself of the pattern, then. Why, in the infinite foresight of God, may not the long-suffering which He exhibited towards St. Paul have been designed for thy comfort and encouragement? Thou art a sinner of the deepest dye. Well, the more urgent is thy need of

the good Physician ; and the more glorious in thy case will be the exercise of His skill. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

4. But the consolation of these sentences would be imperfect, if one of them did not refer distinctly to the channel through which pardoning Love reaches us. You have told me of God's Love, the burdened conscience might say ; you have told me of Christ's Love and willingness to save ; but must not God's claim upon me be satisfied ? Must He not be just, as well as the justifier of him that believeth ? The song of the last step answers this question gloriously : "Hear also what St. John saith. If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins."

"He is the propitiation for our sins ;" that is, we sinners being represented in Him, He, when He suffered, paid our debt in full. Does God demand of us a perfectly holy life ? Our Surety, the representative Man, the Second Adam, yielded to the law a perfect obedience. Does God's outraged justice demand that the transgressor should suffer the penalty of transgression ? You and I have in Christ undergone this penalty ; and Justice herself has nothing more to allege against us. Yet even this is but half of our comfort. Devout members of the Church have sometimes erred in occupying their attention too exclusively with the Death of Christ, in thinking too much of the past Atonement, or, rather, in thinking too little of the present Intercession. The Apostle John in this precious verse presents the Saviour under both aspects. In His Cross, and Passion, and Precious Death, He is a propitiation. In His glorified life, He is an Advocate. He is there in Heaven to perpetuate the work, which on earth He but initiated. Not as though He offers Himself often, or that His Sacrifice can ever be repeated ; but that by His personal advocacy it can be made continuous, and perpetuated in its results unto the end of time. "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death

of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

If then it be asked *how* we are saved, the answer is ready: "Through the satisfaction of Christ for us while on earth, and through His present vigilant guardianship of our interests. We have a propitiation, in answer to the demands of Justice. We have an Advocate in the court of Heaven, to plead the propitiation."

And so, fortified by the Scriptures, the devout worshipper passes into the Sanctuary of the Communion Office, which is jubilant with Praise. As the sound of the Seraphic Hymn breaks upon his ear from within, he (like the prophet Isaiah, who first heard that Hymn) is deeply abased at the thought of his own utter unworthiness to join in such praise: "Woe is me," cries he, "for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." But Our Lord meets him on the threshold, and lifts him up with the invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and I will give you rest," and then reminds him of the infinite Love of God; and St. Paul, a man of like passions with himself, reminds him by his own example that there is salvation even for the chief of sinners; and St. John, the Apostle of Love, whispers a soothing word of satisfaction once made, and advocacy still continuing: and so he is encouraged to "draw nigh in full assurance of faith."

And now we may confidently ask our readers whether the selection and position of these sentences is not admirable! Is it not clear that the more closely we look into the Liturgy, the more we shall discover a mine of study, of thought, of prayer, of theology, underlying the whole of it? Alas! that ordinarily preachers give it so little exposition, and worshippers so little thought! "It is the part of Art," says the proverb, "to conceal Art;" and the plain, nervous, chaste language of the English Prayer Book has this

characteristic, that it does conceal from all but those, who will be at the pains to look below the surface, an amount of art, of care, of erudition, which probably is to be found in no other uninspired Book. While it must be freely conceded (lest we trench on the prerogative of Holy Scripture) that the Liturgy, like all uninspired compositions, has its defects, yet if, when the mind is brought to bear upon it, all the blemishes discovered in it at least admit of justification, and some of them are positively seen to be beauties, Revision surely would be a dangerous task, which might issue in rooting up much good and wholesome wheat, for the sake of ridding the field of a few so-called tares.

Let divines, whose minds are deeply imbued with Scripture, and Primitive Antiquity, and still more with a spirit of devotion,—after making themselves acquainted with Liturgical literature generally, and with the history of our own Liturgy in particular,—have full liberty to undertake the task of Revision, *if with such qualifications they should think it expedient*. But we are persuaded that men so qualified would recoil from it. The more they possessed of the erudition and the piety requisite for the task, the less they would think that they could achieve it satisfactorily. The passages they had at first crossed for examination and correction would seem to them more and more Scriptural and primitive, as the light of Scripture and Primitive Antiquity was more and more let in upon them.

For us who are not divines, let us be thankful for this glorious heritage of our forefathers, “The Book of Common Prayer.” And let us show our thankfulness by pondering the meaning of those words, which Sunday after Sunday slip so glibly over our tongues in worship, that they leave little or no impression upon our hearts.

It was the petition of the disciples, that Christ would teach them to pray (would give them, that is, an authorized form of prayer), “as John also taught his disciples.” It is a petition which for ourselves

is already answered. The Providence and goodness of God has given us a Liturgy, which is a faithful echo and expansion of Our Lord's own model Prayer. But as it is with the model itself, so it is with this faithful echo of it. The sound of both is in the ear, while the sense of neither is in the mind. Pray we then, "Lord, as Thou hast graciously taught us to pray, teach us to understand our prayers ; so that, when we recite them, we may pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also !"

## PART IV

### The Choir

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#### CHAPTER I

*OF THE PREFACE OR THANKSGIVING, AND OF ITS  
RELATION TO THE TERSANCTUS*

“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.”—HEBREWS xiii. 15

THE section of the Communion Service on which we now enter is perhaps of greater antiquity than any other. It can be traced back upwards of fifteen hundred years, and may possibly date from the Apostolic age itself. And accordingly it has a peculiar interest for the devout mind. There is something very solemn in the associations of an old Parish Church, in which generation after generation has worshipped God. It links us in thought to our forefathers in the faith of Christ, who in their days were the subjects of the same struggles, the same temptations as ourselves, and who found their refuge and strength in the mercy and faithfulness of the same Saviour. And a similar interest, only intensified in degree, attaches to a venerable form of Prayer, which has been consecrated by the use of many centuries. These simple and sublime words are the wings, on which many devout souls have been borne up in their flight heavenward—thousands and millions of the

faithful have found no juster expression of the desire, the hope, the gratitude, the love, of which their hearts were full. While a form of prayer is quite new and untried, we are unable to form a judgment as to its value. An experiment must be made of it before its excellences and defects can be recognised,—before we can see the fulness and depth of it, if it have those merits, or discover (what is soon discovered in most modern prayers) its shallowness of thought and feeling. What a precious heirloom, then, must those pieces of devotion be, of which the faithful from the earliest ages have made experiment, without finding in them any defect; with which successive generations have been perfectly satisfied as a vehicle of devout sentiment! And it is upon the consideration of a piece of this kind that we now enter.

This section reaches from the end of the Comfortable Words to the end of the Tercius, and is introduced by the following admonition and respond: “Lift up your hearts;” “We lift them up unto the Lord.” Observe the connexion of these words with what has preceded them. The heart cannot be lifted up, to join the heavenly choir in praise, unless it have first been relieved of its burden of guilt. This burden should be lifted off from it by the Absolution, which Christ’s ambassador has just pronounced in His Name, and by the comfortable sentences of Holy Scripture, which are so admirably calculated to undo the shackles which still hold it down to the earth. Thus released, the heart, like some balloon whose last detaining cord has been cut, is prepared to rise: and at the word of exhortation, “Lift up your hearts,” if it have hitherto followed the Service with the spirit and with the understanding also, it *does* rise.

An exhortation then follows to give thanks unto our Lord God, and the people assenting to this also, Thanksgiving and Praise immediately commence; Thanksgiving in the Preface (whether it be only the general Preface, or whether a special insertion, suitable to the season, has to be made in it), Praise in the

“Tersanctus,” or Hymn of the Seraphim, which at a very early period was engrafted into the Liturgy from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

1. *Thanksgiving and Praise.* Let us observe this indication that we have now arrived at the highest part of the Service. For Thanksgiving and Praise are the devotional exercises of Heaven, and as such will endure for ever. They are analogous to gratitude and love among the Christian graces. The necessity for faith and hope will have passed away, when things eternal become objects of sight, and the Christian is in the full enjoyment of the crown of righteousness. And in like manner prayer and meditation, the religious exercises corresponding to faith and hope, will find no place in a world where there is no want to be supplied, and no void in the heart which remains unfilled. But gratitude and love must endure throughout eternity, and all other graces must merge into them, and lose themselves in them, as streams in the ocean. And similarly Thanksgiving, which is the utterance of gratitude, and Praise, which is the utterance of love, must for ever resound in the heavenly courts; and in these all other exercises of Devotion must be swallowed up.

2. Thanksgiving and Praise, then, are in certain respects kindred to one another, and have a general character in common. Yet they are carefully to be distinguished; and the present section of the Communion Office helps us very beautifully to the distinction. We thank God for what He is to us,—for what He has done for us. We praise Him for what He is in Himself,—for the intrinsic beauty, goodness, and excellence of His character, apart from any benefits which we derive from it. We thank Him in the Preface. We praise Him in the Tersanctus. We thank Him for sending His Son in the flesh, yet “without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin;” for destroying sin by the death of Christ, and restoring to us everlasting life by His Resurrection; for allowing and causing a place to be prepared for us



in Heaven by our great Forerunner; for bringing us, by the preaching of His Gospel, "out of darkness and error into the clear light and true knowledge of" Him, "and of" His "Son Jesus Christ;" and for giving us grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity. We praise God, on the other hand, for His moral and natural beauty; for His holiness, which is in itself a lovely attribute, however terrible to sinners; and for that glory, whereof not Heaven only, but Earth also, is full—the glory which struggles forth into expression in all the stars of the firmament, and in all the flowers of the earth, those "stars which in Earth's firmament do shine."

3. It will be seen, I think, from what has been said, that Praise is the higher exercise of the two. While, on the one hand, we must beware of the error maintained by Fénelon, Jonathan Edwards, and others, who stigmatized gratitude as a sordid affection, and went so far as to say that no love of God is really the offspring of grace, unless it be entirely disinterested, and free from all consideration of our personal advantage; on the other hand we cannot, consistently with truth, deny that the love of God for Himself is a higher state of mind, and praise of Him a higher exercise, than gratitude and thanksgiving for His benefits. Nor can there be any doubt that, as the Christian grows in grace, he will grow also in disinterested love; that he will be able to appreciate more fully, not only the mercy and goodness of God to himself, but the excellence of the Divine character; and that our advance or backwardness in this respect may serve as a useful criterion of our spiritual state. Not however that it is expedient or judicious to analyse too minutely our motives in this respect, or to tease ourselves because we cannot discover in our own minds sentiments towards God which we judge to be purely disinterested. A generous gratitude to God,—the gratitude which does not make any mercenary computation of the number of His blessings, but thrills

with an affectionate sense of His goodness, and with a desire to please Him (and no other is genuine), easily passes into love, if indeed it be not love already; and Thanksgiving, when sincere, has a natural tendency to pass into Praise. The Thanksgiving of the Church, drawn from the consideration of the Saviour's Mission, the Comforter's Mission, and the Revelation to her of the Truth, mounts nimbly up the ladder, on which Angels and Archangels, and all the company of Heaven, are praising God for His holiness and glory.

4. We must offer one or two remarks in this place on one of the names of the Holy Communion, which has not yet come before us, but which now naturally presents itself for consideration. This Service then has been called from very early times the Eucharist or Thanksgiving Service. Many able commentators suppose that the word has the sanction of Inspiration; and that when St. Paul writes in 1 Cor. xiv. 16, "When thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" he is alluding to the great Thanksgiving Prayer<sup>1</sup> which the Minister was in the habit of reciting at the Communion, when blessing the Bread and Wine, and to which the laity responded by a hearty and devout Amen. But whether or not this allusion can be satisfactorily made out, certain it is that the word "Eucharist" has been very long in use to express this rite; and that it gives us one main aspect of the Ordinance, and an aspect under which the early Church delighted to look at it. Our own Church adopts exactly the same view of the Ordinance, when she employs these words: "We entirely desire Thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this *our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.*" It is rather singular, not indeed that Thanksgiving and Praise should have been largely introduced into the Service of the Communion, but that they should have been con-

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Professor Blunt's "History of the Christian Church during the three first Centuries" (London, 1856), p. 33.

sidered so to form the core and nucleus of the whole, that the current name for the Ordinance should be the Thanksgiving Service. In this name you observe the elements are ignored ; there is nothing to remind us of the Bread and Wine, or of the participation in them by the Communicants. Perhaps the early Christians saw so clearly the permanent element of the Ordinance, that the thought of this loosened the hold of their minds on that which is temporary. The participation of the Supper has a prescribed term, after which it must pass away. It is ordained to endure till, and only till, "the Lord come." But so far as the Service is one of Thanksgiving and Praise ; so far as in it we join our voices with those of Cherubim and Seraphim, Angels and Archangels, and all the company of Heaven ; so far it can never pass away. It is probable that in some part of the Christian world the Eucharist will be actually in celebration, when the hour for the Second Advent arrives. If it be so, while the earthly elements of the rite will of course be superseded by the Lord's appearance, and while there will be no longer any need of remembrancers of a Saviour who is present, yet the Thanksgiving Service will undergo no interruption, but will be taken up into the harmonies of Heaven ; and suddenly with those poor waiting (and perhaps persecuted) Christians, who are celebrating the death of their Master, there will be a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory : Glory be to thee, O Lord most High." And as at the marriage of Cana the weak element of water was transmuted in the Lord's Presence into a rich and genial wine, so the poor accents of these worshipping saints shall be turned into heavenly adoration by the sudden influx into them of joy and praise ; and the song, which the Seraphim have been singing from the beginning of the Creation, and which the Church of Christ has from the earliest times engrafted into her Liturgy, shall seem to them "a new song," when that Church, from being militant, has become triumphant.

Reader, if Thanksgiving and Praise are to be the ceaseless service of the true Church of God throughout eternity, are we qualifying ourselves for joining in them? If Thanksgiving and Praise are the very atmosphere of glory, are we becoming, by the daily cultivation of a spirit of thankfulness—a sanguine, buoyant, elastic spirit—acclimatized to glory? God will not place His people in Heaven by an arbitrary act of His will; there must be in every one, who is to be transplanted thither, a congeniality with the climate—a “meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.” Are our hearts then in tune for Thanksgiving and Praise? And if, through natural infirmity, not always so; if very often, through fatigue, or outbreaks of temper, or indolence, or the inroads of worldly carefulness it is otherwise, and the heart, instead of “singing and making melody to the Lord,” makes a jarring discord in His ear, do we (as soon as may be) take it down and tune it again by prayer, and study of God’s Word, and thought of His mercies? Are we careful to *keep* it in tune by a thankful remembrance of Christ’s Death in the way of His appointment? And do we bear in mind that thankfulness is not only cultivated by the Holy Communion, but also is (in a measure) a qualification for it? Do we reflect that, if the Communion be the Church’s great Thanksgiving Service, our correspondence with it and fitness for it must stand to a great extent in genuine thankfulness of heart? that therefore any thing like murmuring at our lot, discouragement at our trials and failures, limitation in our own minds of Christ’s mercy, wisdom, and power, corroding cares, acrimonious feelings to others, must throw us out of harmony with the Ordinance, and act as direct disqualifications for it? For all these things are drawbacks and hindrances to the fulfilment of the precept, “Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice;” and it is only by the fulfilment of this precept in the general tone of our minds that we can live in a state of habitual preparedness for the Supper of the Lord.

We have spoken of the duty and importance both in relation to our hereafter, and to preparedness for the Holy Communion, of cultivating the grace of thankfulness. And in this work there is one danger against which we should be on our guard. In mounting the ladder of Praise, we must not think scorn of the lower steps, or aim at the highest flights before we have achieved the more ordinary ones. Christ's Death is indeed the supreme subject of thankfulness, because it is the procuring cause of our Redemption; but even the smallest temporal mercies may prove real incentives to gratitude, without in the least drawing off the mind from the thought of the Saviour. The glow of health and animal spirits, the happiness and comfort of home, the pleasures of the intellect, the amusement from which the mind gains a temporary relief, and all the manifold small contentments of daily life, may be looked at in the light of the Atonement, considered as the purchase of Christ's Blood, and as won for us by His Intercession. Thus every little blessing and comfort may become a separate string, giving a sound of its own, in the great harp of Praise. And that it may be so, it may be well each night to review, not our own conduct only, but the mercies with which God during that day has visited us; and spreading them out before the eyes of our mind in detail, to consider that it was for these small mercies, as well as for the greater blessings of Redemption and Sanctification, that our Lord agonized and bled, and that these therefore ought to contribute their quota of impulse towards a generous and loving service of Him.

Finally; from the interesting variety in the Communion Service, which is made by the Proper Preface at the five great Festivals, a practical lesson may be derived. The Liturgy of the Church may usefully serve for a model in our private devotions, as well as for a guide in our public. And, when studied as a model, it teaches us this, that it is useful to have a general framework of prayer, and occasionally to vary that general framework by insertions suitable to the

occasion. Self-examination will usually furnish topics for these insertions. Have I committed special sins this day? I will confess them. Have I received special answers to prayer? I will acknowledge them. But there are certain seasons in the Christian's life, with which peculiar associations connect themselves, and which should be allowed to give rise to special expressions of devout sentiment. Such are a birthday, a New Year's Day, a wedding day, the day of the Baptism or Confirmation of a child, the anniversary of a friend's death, or of the day (if it have been a marked one) when we were first brought under the influence of Religion. Let some allusion to the event in the way of humiliation, or petition, or thanksgiving, be woven into our daily prayer; and thus let the transaction be taken up into, and become part of the aliment of, our spiritual life. For not only the Church in general, but each individual soul, has its own seasons of special humiliation and special joy. And to avail ourselves of these seasons, as incentives either to a deeper penitence or a livelier thankfulness, is a point of holy policy, which will be found to contribute greatly to the liveliness and reality of our devotion.

For the besetting snare of all stated prayers offered at set times is formalism; and this snare is best avoided by a certain amount of variety, while the general platform of our prayer is the same. Our minds at different periods are in a different key. When we tune them for devotion, let us manage them adroitly in reference to that key, and try to bring out its peculiar character, so that all their moods may be made (under grace) to minister to God's glory. Thus shall we conduct our private devotions in the spirit of the Proper Preface, which gives to the Church's Thanksgiving Service a different complexion at different seasons, celebrating at one time the Incarnation, at another the Resurrection, at another the Ascension of our Lord, now the descent of the Holy Ghost, and now the Revelation of the full mystery of the Godhead.

## CHAPTER II.

OF OUR COMMUNION WITH THE ANGELS, AND OF  
THE TERSANCTUS

“Ye are come . . . to an innumerable company of angels”  
Προσεληλύθατε μυριάσι ἀγγέλων.—HEB. xii. 22 (part)

THE Holy Communion, as its name denotes, is that Ordinance of the Church, in which we have the most intimate communion with our Lord, which it is possible to have upon earth. The assimilation of the elements to the body, their absorption into the system in the ordinary process of nutrition, is a sign of the closeness of our union with Christ, which is by this Sacrament cemented. Now communion with Christ involves communion with all those who are at one with Him; the Communion of Saints is wrapped up in it. *Communion, first, with distant saints*, separated from us, it may be, by mountain-range and ocean, by many a weary tract of land and sea. One great feature, therefore, of the Communion Service is a grand intercession with the God who has “taught us to make prayers and supplications, and to give thanks, for all men,” “for the whole state of Christ’s Church militant here in earth.” *Communion, next, with departed saints*. Their place upon earth knows them no more; their relations with those who are left behind seem to be altogether suspended; they have ceased to be, what they once were, living influences, shaping the character of those among whom they sojourned; even their memory becomes less and less vivid with time, and fades in the mind of those once intimate with them, till it approximates to a name; but they are with Christ, and we, too, being with Him in the Holy Communion, if we receive this Ordinance faithfully, they are certainly (although invisibly) with us in the union of His Mystical Body. We definitely call them to mind, therefore, in the celebration of the Rite, blessing and praising “God’s

holy Name, for all" His "servants departed this life in" His "faith and fear," and "beseeching" Him "to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of his heavenly kingdom."

But, finally, in Communion with Christ *Communion with the Angels is involved*. And accordingly this Office contains two Angelic Hymns, one of which precedes, and the other follows, the administration; the first being the Hymn which the Prophet Isaiah heard the Seraphim chanting in the Temple, the other the jubilant Song of the Angels, who appeared to the shepherds on the night of the Nativity.

Of the Communion of the Church of Christ with Angels, a doctrine which is brought out by this feature of the Service, the secret and history is as follows. It is true indeed that, before the Incarnation, Angels were occasionally sent on errands to God's faithful servants for their warning, encouragement, or succour. But at that time the union between Heaven and Earth, which was to be made by the Incarnation of the Son of God, lay only in the Divine counsels,—had not yet been effectuated; and therefore the participation of the Church in the worship of the heavenly host could not be as yet declared,—man could not as yet be formally admitted to join in the services of Heaven. A glimpse of what those services were had indeed been afforded to the Prophet Isaiah. "In the year that king Uzziah died," he saw the Seraphim surrounding the throne of the Lord, and crying one to another, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." The Evangelist St. John, in referring to this striking scene, informs us that his Master was the Person in the Divine Nature, whom Isaiah on that occasion saw: "These things," says he, after quoting some of the words in the sixth chapter, in which the vision is recorded, "said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." The information is most interesting, for it not only establishes most clearly the Divinity of Christ, but also furnishes a connecting link with what follows in the history of man's participation



in the worship of angels. From all eternity, "before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made," Christ, the Representative to creatures of the Invisible God, had been adored in these strains by the Seraphim. Now, when He came down from Heaven to undertake the work of our Redemption, these worshipping Seraphim must of necessity attend Him hither as His heavenly escort. One of them goes before, and announces His Nativity to the Virgin. And as soon as that Nativity actually occurs, the full choir is heard hymning the great event, —not in the Temple (which represented Heaven), but in the outlying fields of a small town in Judæa. Now observe how their language is modified by their circumstances. In the Hymn which they chanted in Heaven they had indeed made mention of the Earth, but merely as the theatre of the glory of God, the stage on which all that is proceeding, even the disturbing agencies of the human will, work together for the accomplishment of His purposes and the triumph of His cause. But while there is a glorification of God in the heavenly Hymn, *there is no indication of any mind of love or kindness towards man.* The interests of Humanity do not there come into view; for even the condemned will glorify God in His justice. But in the Hymn of these same angels, *when drawn down to earth in the train of the Redeemer,* while still the glorification of God occupies the chief place, mercy towards erring man is proclaimed in no indistinct tones; "Glory to God in the highest, and *on earth peace, good-will towards men.*"

The change of tone is very striking. The Angels seem to imply, even if they do not say, "Since God is now at peace with you through His union with your nature, we, the Angels, God's heavenly worshippers, joyfully salute you, and admit you into the fellowship of our worship, and bid you join your voices with ours." But not only at the Nativity do the Angels appear in attendance upon their Master, but, as you well remember, at all the more critical periods of His

career. Angels ministered unto Him after the Temptation; they strengthened Him in His Passion; they waited at His sepulchre, to assist at and announce the Resurrection; they appeared at the Ascension, and doubtless in that hour formed His escort and joined His triumph, crying, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Thus He was the true Jacob's ladder, set up upon earth in His Humanity, and reaching to Heaven in His Divinity, upon which Angels were continually ascending and descending; the true and God-built tower of Babel, by which the Almighty gives to sinful man access unto Himself, and on whose winding stair the shining hosts of Heaven pass to and fro continually, bearing upwards the tribute of human prayer and praise, and downwards the messages of grace and peace.

But we must not regard our Blessed Lord's Humanity as isolated from that of His redeemed people. We cannot separate from Him His mystical body, the Church, with which He is indissolubly one. There is a Jacob lying beneath the ladder, to whom the Angels appear in a comfortable vision. There is a city clustering at the base of the tower, into which the heavenly messengers pass along the winding stair. The passage being fully opened by the finished work of Christ, which re-established the old highway of communication (formerly blocked up) between God and man, the Angels are now in constant intercourse with the heirs of salvation, succour and defend us upon earth, on occasions when we little dream of their presence, and yield us a true sympathy in all our trials. And accordingly the Apostle says, "Ye are come to an innumerable company of angels." He is describing the Christian Church in its present, not in its future state; and pointing out the grand sweep which it takes into the invisible world, a sweep embracing not only "the spirits of just men made perfect," but also principalities and powers in heavenly places. And that Our Lord would not have us forget

these last, or put them out of sight, is clear from the fact that in that perfect Prayer which He has put into our mouths,—a Prayer so extremely concise, that we cannot conceive anything impertinent or superfluous to have been introduced into it,—He directs our eyes towards the services done by Angels to Almighty God, as the model of the services we ourselves should render Him. “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” This is the Prayer which He brought with Him, to domesticate it upon earth, the Prayer which savours of Heaven in every part; for the first and principal clause of it, consisting of the three first petitions, is for the glorification of God, the hallowing of His Name, the coming of His kingdom, and the doing of His will upon earth; and the needs of man do not even come into view till the subsequent part of it. And this “Tersanctus,” which we have in the Communion Service, may be said to be a fragment of the praise of Heaven which Our Lord drew down with Him when He came to help and raise poor fallen men,—a few notes from the music of seraphic harps, to be taken up by our faltering voices as best we may. There is indeed an awfulness about the strain which might well discompose and discourage the minds of sinners. The Angels who never fell, speak of God to one another as holy; they make mention of His glory as filling the whole earth. The prophet who first saw the vision and heard the words, could not endure either the sight or the song. He felt painfully the want of harmony between such worship and his own sinfulness, the unsuitability of the anthems of Heaven to the defiled lips of grovelling man. “Woe is me!” cried he, “for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” He is strengthened, however, by one of the Seraphim, who takes a live coal from off the altar, and laying it upon his lips, says to him: “Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” And we are to be strengthened

to sing this Hymn of the Seraphim, all sinful and defiled though we be, by the thought of the Atoning Death of Christ, which we commemorate in the Lord's Supper, by faith in His broken Body and spilled Blood, which the Ordinance both represents to us and conveys. In this Sacrament Christ is evidently set forth before our eyes crucified amongst us. And in the confidence which that spectacle gives us, we need not fear to open our lips, and praise God in the same accents as those employed by "Angels and Archangels, and all the company of heaven."

We have seen, then, how it is that the Church of God is admitted to participate in the worship of Angels. Christ brought that worship with Him down to our planet, and, having by His work of Atonement and Mediation restored the relations between Heaven and Earth, which the Fall had interrupted, embraced in one community men and Angels, and bequeathed to His redeemed Church the anthems of glorified spirits. But it is given us to know not merely that we are privileged to be fellow-worshippers with the Angels; but that they feel an interest in us, which makes this communion a reality on their part. Not only are they joined with us in Christ in a common bond; but they love us and care for us. Their Lord and ours has assured us that there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth; that each sincere conversion makes the harps of Heaven vibrate with a new anthem of praise; and that the heavenly host are so far from looking down upon human infirmity, of which one would suppose that the perfection of their nature might lead them to think scorn, that the highest of them—those who do always behold the face of our Father which is in Heaven—exercise a special guardianship over little children, the feeblest members of the human family.

And now let us consider what conclusions of practical value our subject may have suggested.

There is no doubt, then, that we should be much

more strong, much more confident, and much more fervent in our worship of God, if we did not feel alone in it. We struggle against our sins upon our knees; and we do so oftentimes very feebly, and with intermittent energy, because we secretly think that no one but ourselves is interested in the struggle, or has the smallest concern in our victory. All of us remember the old fable of our childhood about the bundle of sticks, each of which might easily be snapped in sunder by itself, but which, bound together, defied the efforts of a strong man to break them. The moral is most instructive. It is a well-known phenomenon of our nature that the mere consciousness of sympathy and united effort will give to the will a strength almost invincible. This was the great secret of success in the Temperance movement. The detestable vice proved too strong for a man, so long as he struggled against it as an individual, and found his only resources in the approbation of his own conscience. But no sooner did he league with others under a common banner against this moral enemy,—no sooner did he thus gain the assurance that others were fighting all around him at his side,—than he prevailed against the strong temptation, and eventually became master of his own will. It was a great lesson to this effect, that without the assurance of hearty sympathy and co-operation we can never achieve any signal success against our spiritual foes.—But then must not God have known the constitution of our nature in this respect; and in the Gospel, which is so wonderfully framed to meet all the wants of that nature, must He not have made some provision, by which this principle shall be enlisted on the side of Truth and Godliness? We entirely believe that He has done so. In that Creed, which reduces the whole of Christian Doctrine to the fewest and most essential Articles, we avow our belief in “the Holy Catholic Church,” (which is) “the Communion of saints.” Rightly understood, this Article nerves us for righteousness almost as much as some of the foregoing and more fundamental. We avow our belief that in our struggles

against sin, the world, and the devil, we are leagued together under a common banner with all the living servants of God, with those who departed this life in His faith and fear, and with holy Angels. But do we realize the belief, or is it merely speculative? While we pray, for example, do we feel the power of the thought that thousands are lifting up their hearts at the same time,—many of them more faithful than ourselves,—and that of these thousands some are actually supporting us in their prayers, supplicating God to “strengthen such as do stand; to comfort and help the weak-hearted; to raise up them that fall; and finally to beat down Satan under” His people’s “feet”? Have we ever reflected that there is probably no instant of time, at which some members of the Christian Church are not approaching the one Father, through the one Mediator, under the influence of the one Spirit, and virtually advancing by faithful prayer the coming of the kingdom in the hearts of all? Beautiful is that comment of Bishop Andrewes upon the words of St. Paul: “The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered;” “But is thy spirit and mine unutterable, which often is no spirit at all, and often a cold one? Surely this can hardly be said of the individual Christian. But then there is no day, and no moment in which God is not supplicated by the faithful, by one more fervently, by another more tepidly; and because all the faithful together make up one dove, from this dove proceed the unutterable groans, that is to say from the groans of all for the common behoof, which groans, as they are united together in the body of the Church, benefit all.”

But there are others interested in our worship of God, and in our struggles against sin, besides those who still sojourn upon earth. There is an innumerable company of Angels watching our conflict, sorrowing with a pure and beautiful sorrow at our unfaithfulness, rejoicing on our return to God, and mingling their accents with our praises. If it pleased God to make

transparent for a moment the veil of gross matter, these Angels would be seen thronging the earth on their errands of love, frequenting the assemblies of Christians at all times, and specially whenever the Master's dying Love is commemorated, and His Flesh and Blood are in a mystery partaken of by the faithful. We are assured, not only that "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world," but also that "they that be with us are *more than they that be with them.*" The fallen, the condemned, the accursed, represent after all only a small section of God's creatures. There is an innumerable company of the heavenly host leagued together under Christ against the rulers of the darkness of this world. You never strive alone. Not only is there an outflowing of most tender compassion towards you from the bosom of the Divine Master; but every pure and good intelligence in the universe is on your side, whether all be conscious of it or not. There are thousands upon Earth, who are at present being visited with temptations which are the exact counterpart of yours. They are triumphing over them in the might of Christ; why should not you? The dead are waiting and watching in Paradise for the hour, when God shall "accomplish the number of" His "elect, and hasten" His "kingdom." And as in a starlight night a thousand eyes of fire look down from Heaven upon the benighted traveller, so in your dark pilgrimage through this world your course is run under the eyes of principalities and powers, bent down upon you from another sphere. Nor do you ever worship God alone. That infirm and feeble prayer of thine, of whose impotence you are so painfully conscious, is attracted into the strong current, first, of Our Lord's perfect Intercession, and, secondly, of the unutterable groans of the Holy Spirit in the Church. And when thou givest praise, thou strikest a note which vibrates through the whole Creation. Praise is an impulse in the spiritual world which radiates far and wide from the centre which sent it forth. It is taken up and echoed back by all creatures in Heaven and Earth,

The low, faltering, and discordant notes, which it may have had originally, are overborne by, and drowned in, the loftier melodies which absorb it. And these melodies are from the harps of Cherubim and Seraphim, who unto God continually do cry, recognising in their anthems the grand multiplicity of the Divine Praise, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of Thy Glory."

Thoughts like these, however, must be used, not as an excuse for wilful languor in worship, but as an encouragement under infirmities of the flesh, when the spirit is willing to worship God. And indeed they have a warning for us as well as an encouragement. For if Praise be so august an exercise, and if in it we join our voices with those of the hierarchy of Heaven, we must see to it that we do our utmost to get our hearts in tune before engaging in it. Words of angelic praise upon the lips, without any spark of angelic love and zeal in the heart, what a profaneness must they be, and what a mockery! Let us ask God, lest we should entangle ourselves in such impiety, that He would touch our lips, like those of His Prophet, with a live coal from off the altar, kindling our affections of hope, and zeal, and love, and making us more warmly aspire to those joys which are at His right hand.

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## CHAPTER III

### *OF THE PRAYER OF ACCESS*

"They feared as they entered into the cloud."

LUKE ix. 34

**T**HE true temper of devotion is fervour mingled with humiliation. On the one hand, anything like cold-



ness in the worship of God is unworthy of the love which He has shown us ; unworthy of the position into which our Redemption and Regeneration have brought us. To stand at a distance from the throne of God with chilled hearts and tied tongues, is virtually to regard it as a Throne of Judgment, and forget that it is a Throne of Grace. But, on the other hand, while we ought to sun ourselves in the glorious privilege of access to God through Christ, we should never lose sight of reverence and godly fear in our worship. Our position merely as creatures demands this. Angels when they worship, though sinless, cover their faces and their feet with their wings. Our momentary dependence upon God for all things, if that stood alone, should make us profoundly reverential in our approaches to Him. But it does *not* stand alone. Our nature is not merely dependent, but deeply tainted with sin. We are not only dust and ashes, but sinful dust and ashes, taking upon ourselves to speak to the Lord. The three disciples on the holy mountain were privileged to see the glory of their Master, to hear the Father's own voice drop from the vault of Heaven, and to enter into the bright cloud which was there (as in the Tabernacle and former Temple), the symbol of the Divine Presence. But favoured and privileged as they were, it is significantly said that they "feared as they entered into the cloud."

Now the circumstances of the devout communicant at this period of the rite may admit of a comparison with theirs. We are about to enter into the closest communion with God which it is possible to have upon earth. We are approaching God's Table to be fed "with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of" His "Son our Saviour Jesus Christ." We have just been admitted to the worship of Heaven, and have joined with Angels and Archangels, and all the company of Heaven, in the adoration and glorification of the Holy Trinity. Our glorified Saviour, who is invisibly present in the midst of the two or three gathered together to celebrate His Death, waits to

receive us. And as on the Mount of Transfiguration two Saints stood by and assisted at the great solemnity, and spoke of the decease of Christ, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, so we have heard in the Comfortable Words the voices of two New Testament Saints, St. Paul and St. John, witnessing to us that Christ Jesus came into the world to save even the chief of sinners, and that we have in Him a propitiation and a living Advocate. Here, then, are the Saints bearing testimony to the Lord. Here are the Angels, with whose voices we presume to join ours. Here is the Lord Himself, going to make Himself over to us, not by a carnal communication, but in a mystery which transcends our comprehension and our power of expression. What wonder if we fear, and once again prostrate ourselves, as we enter into this bright cloud? What wonder if, after joining in the Hymn of the Angels, we shrink once again under a sense of our unworthiness to partake of these holy mysteries, and falling upon our knees, before yet the celebration of the Rite mounts to its climax, humbly say, "We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies"?

We may here take the opportunity of observing that the same mixture of fervour and humiliation characterises our whole Book of Common Prayer. Special instances of it are to be found in the Litany, in the Visitation of the Sick, and in the Burial Service. But there is no instance which in depth and pathos of devotional feeling exceeds that before us. The sinking from the light and music of the Seraphic Hymn into the abject self-abasement of the Prayer of Access, is one of the most striking of the many striking features of this Service. It is like the sudden descent of some aëronaut from the brightness and glow of a noontide sky into a dark glen, where great trees interlace their branches, and leave only patches of light on the greensward below.

If the principles on which our Liturgy is constructed

may serve as a guide to us in private devotion, we may learn an important practical lesson from what has been said. The mixture in due proportions of reverence and warmth is the perfection of worship, which must be aimed at in the closet as well as in the Church. How is it to be obtained? By keeping the principle before our minds in the first place.—Then, as to details, it will give freedom and life to prayer and praise, if we do not entirely confine ourselves to set forms; if we vary and enlarge upon our set prayer, whenever and at whatever point the mind feels disposed to do so; if we meditate much beforehand on God's infinite willingness (as overwhelmingly evidenced by the gift of His Son) to give us all things necessary for our soul's health, and to cover, by a fresh outflowing of parental love, all past sins. At the same time, let all tendency to diffuseness and overfluency in prayer be kept in check by still holding (if I may speak figuratively) the bridle of the form. Prayers purely extemporaneous run the risk of irreverence, just as prayers purely recited run the risk of formalism. And let there always be a pause before the commencement of stated prayer, to call to mind the awfulness of the Divine Majesty, and the greatness of His condescension in allowing us through His Son to address Him.

The Prayer now before us divides itself into three parts. There is, first, the humiliation of the earlier part. There is, secondly, the petition of the latter part. And from the first of these we pass to the second by the bridge of the following sentiment: "But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy." From the consideration of this property in Him, with whom we have to do, we encourage ourselves to prefer our petition to Him, vile though we be.

We need not do more than exhibit shortly the salient features of the two chief branches of the prayer.

1. Our self-abasement expresses itself here in the language of Holy Scripture. We take up and echo

back the sentiment of one, who in her day was a successful petitioner for Christ's mercy, and we say, "We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table." Now consider the position into which we throw ourselves by the use of these words.

The communicant's many and grievous sins fly in his face, as he is about to present himself at God's board; God seems to discourage him, as Christ discouraged the Syrophœnician, by alleging that this high privilege is for those who have lived as reconciled children, not for those who, by reason of their wilful defilement and their frequent relapses into unclean living, are rather to be termed dogs. And the sinner pleads guilty to God's charge. He is a dog. Nay, he is worse far than that Gentile, who first assumed the term as expressive of her own position. She never had his privileges. She never stood in his relation to Christ. She never was an adopted child. And so he will not even stand upon his claim to be treated as she was treated. Not only is he unworthy of the acceptance which she found, but of that which she sued for. He takes rank below her. He has forfeited even the crumbs. "We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table."

Now is not this language calculated to awaken in the mind a whole train of humbling (and yet most consolatory) reflections, and to stir in the heart a profound self-abasement, admirably suited to the occasion? It is as if the Liturgy invited us to throw in our lot with those who, in the days of His flesh, sought Christ under some distress, and by perseverance in their applications to Him amid discouragements, obtained relief. We are reminded by this slight allusion how no petitioner who so applied was ever sent away empty; how the treasure-house of His bounty was always thrown open to them eventually, if only they persevered in their petition. This train of associations once summoned up, the thought rushes into the mind with consolatory force: "Why should not I be as they? Why should not my persistence, my urgent

entreaty, in spite of all the grave charges which my conscience (nay, which Christ in my conscience) seems to urge against me, be as greatly honoured as theirs was ?”

And what an answer, moreover, is here to the scruples of those sincere Christians, who allege the consciousness of their own unworthiness as a reason for absenting themselves from the Table of the Lord : “ We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table ! ” You could not use these words sincerely, if you imagined that you were worthy. The very imagination would of itself render you unworthy. In order to justify this language, there cannot be too deep a feeling of our own corruption, of the poverty and inadequacy of our repentance, our faith, our love. Surely we ought to realize the words which we use on this most solemn occasion. And how can we realize our unworthiness to gather up even the crumbs, if there be remaining in the heart a particle of self-complacency ; if we are well satisfied with our religious attainments, and know not experimentally that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ?

From this beautiful and appropriate reference to the Gospel narrative in the Prayer of Access we may learn the wisdom of enriching our devotions by similar allusions. Most of Our Blessed Lord’s miracles suggest words and topics which we may use in this manner. Thus, for example, thinking of ourselves as defiled with the leprosy of sin, we may say to Him, when we kneel before Him, as the leper of old said, “ Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. ” Regarding ourselves as utterly helpless, we may address to Him the touching appeal of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, “ Lord, I have no man to help me. ” When by the changes and chances of this mortal life, we seem to be tossed on the waves of this troublesome world, we may cry to Him, as Peter cried, when his faith failed him on the literal wave, “ Lord, save me ; ” or, as the disciples cried in the tempest,

“Carest thou not that we perish?” We may entreat Him, when we feel how deaf we are by nature to His word, and how dumb in His praises, to say unto us, “Ephphatha,” and to open, and keep open, the avenues of communication between our souls and the spiritual world. Or laying ourselves simply before Him, in all the helplessness of our natural infirmity, as the paralytic was laid by his friends, we may look up wistfully into His face for the inspiring word of Absolution, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.” It is astonishing how much life and warmth may thus be given to our prayers. There is in many of those stories of the Gospel cures a peculiar pathos: and there is no surer way of appreciating that pathos than by identifying ourselves with the sufferer, and finding our own case represented in his. Thus, moreover, our devotions will savour, as all devotions should savour, of the Word of God; and we shall cultivate a unity of experience with those early believers, who lived in an age far less artificial than our own, when Divine Truth came into contact with the heart of man freshly and strongly, and not through the diluting medium of conventional religious phraseologies. This it is which constitutes the real charm of the prayers of Bishop Andrewes. They are almost entirely Scriptural. And as the Scriptural language of devotion, being the utterance of the Holy Spirit in man, comes home to the heart with a power peculiarly its own (witness the Psalms of David, which have been ever the great Prayer Book of the Church), these Devotions, though not particularly attractive at first, yet when used and tested by experience (the only way of ascertaining the real value of Forms of Prayer), have been so much approved, that the compilation ranks, perhaps, as the first devotional work of the English Church, and it has been said, and re-echoed by many a devout soul: “Pray with Bishop Andrewes for one week; and he will be pleasant in thy life; and at the hour of death he will not forsake thee.” Not that these devotions are the effusions of the Bishop’s own

mind. There is scarcely an original page in the whole volume. What is so attractive is his marvellous power of manipulating Scriptural phrases and incidents,—a power analogous to that which the expert musician wields over the notes of an instrument,—the gift of bringing out the full force and power of Scriptural narratives, Scriptural pleadings, Scriptural expostulations, Scriptural promises on God's part, and Scriptural utterances of the deepest things which there are in the human heart. The Word in his hands is like a great harpsichord; and by his masterly and flexible management of its notes, he brings out the whole compass of its devotional sentiments. But it is one of those books which cannot possibly be appreciated otherwise than by an experimental acquaintance with it.

2. The petition which forms the latter part of this beautiful prayer, is for such a participation of the Ordinance, as may ensure to us its high and mysterious blessings: "Grant us so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood." The salient feature of this part,—that which challenges observation as being a departure, not only from ordinary religious phraseology, but from modern ideas,—is the distinct reference to the body as partaking in the blessings of Redemption. Certainly this clause is not conceived in the strain of popular theology. There is in the minds of many religionists a floating notion, entirely in accordance with the heresy of the ancient Gnostic, that the body is the root of all evil, and that the liberation of the soul from matter is necessary to ensure its perfection. But even where such a view as this would be explicitly disavowed in terms, there often exists an idea that Christianity is purely and exclusively spiritual, that it has nothing at all to do with the material part of man. The Scripture, however, expressly says, not only that the body is destined to be hereafter the subject of glorification ("if the Spirit of him that raised

up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also *quicken your mortal bodies* by his Spirit that dwelleth in you"), but that it is destined to be at present the subject of sanctification: "Now the very God of peace sanctify you *wholly*; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and *body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." It tells us that Christ took, and has carried with Him into Heaven a human body, "with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature,"—a fact from which it is easily concluded that matter, as matter, cannot have in it any inherent evil. And it exhorts us, finally, to convert the members of our bodies into the materials of a sacrifice, which bodies therefore must be capable of a real consecration: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your *bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Now the two Sacraments (among other aspects of them) are God's great protest to this effect,—that the religion adapted to man is not exclusively spiritual. God in the Sacraments uses the things of sense as a vehicle of spiritual blessings, by way of teaching this among other lessons, that the matter of which we are compounded is to be embraced, as well as the spiritual element of our nature, in the great scheme of Redemption. And as regards the second Sacrament in particular, Our Blessed Lord has used words which seem in some mysterious way to connect the faithful reception of it with the Resurrection of the body unto Life: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

A Communion Service, therefore, would, I apprehend, be imperfect, if there were no recognition in it of the consecration and sanctification of the body, of its receiving in this Ordinance the stamp and the pledge of its eventual glorification. According to this view of the subject, the clause before us ("that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body") is an integral



feature of the Communion Office,—one which brings out a distinct and separate aspect of Christ's sacrificial work, which we are now commemorating. The sin of the soul has penetrated into and defiled the soul's tenement, the body. Hence comes our liability to disease, and the sad enfeebling of our mental powers by the defectiveness or impaired action of some one bodily organ in each one of us. When the soul is sanctified, when the will receives a new direction, and the affections a new tendency,—the impulse flows on towards, and reaches the body, the members of which are thenceforth yielded as instruments of righteousness unto God. It is true, indeed, that the body is "sinful," and therefore intrinsically unworthy of this glorious consecration. But through our union with Christ (the union which by a faithful reception of this Sacrament is cemented) the sinful body is made clean by Christ's Body (the Body in which He bore our sins upon the Tree), even as the sinful soul is washed, through the spilling of the Blood of Christ in expiation of sin. Purified through this union, the body becomes fit to be a sacrifice, and accordingly is yielded unto God in the words of the Post-Communion Prayer: "Here we offer, and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and *bodies*, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee."

Such is the doctrinal significance of the clause before us. God grant it may not be to us a barren dogma, but that we may carry it out to its legitimate practical results! Surely if the body shares in the blessings of Redemption, and receives the dignity of a consecration to God, it should be hallowed by temperance, soberness, and chastity. And more than this. It is not only to be the subject of restraint, but to be made to minister actively in the service of God. Does it do this in each one of us? Do the feet carry us on errands of mercy, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction? Do the hands engage willingly in profitable labour, and having by that labour gained more than suffices for our own wants, are they opened freely in the relief of distress? Are the eyes sanctified by being fixed on the

glorious works of God, while the mind takes occasion to glorify the Creator? Or, if we are far from landscape and scenery, are they employed in reading the Law of the Lord, and in scanning with thoughtful prayer His wonderful testimonies? Are the ears opened to the glorious harmony of praise, which Nature in her every district is sending up to the Throne of God,—opened to holy and wise counsels, closed against flattery and sinful enticement? Do we invoke God's watch over our mouth, and His custody of the door of our lips, and do we also watch that whatsoever passes out of that door may be pure and sincere at all events, and (as much as possible) useful and edifying?

Lord, whose feet carried Thee swiftly to the house of mourning, whose hands gave health to the infirm, and blessing to the little children, whose eyes, as Thou stoodest at the sepulchre, were suffused with tears, whose ears were pierced with revilings for our sakes, in whose mouth was no guile, and whose lips were full of grace; let us not be backward to yield to Thee the service of all our members, and do Thou preserve them blameless unto that day, when Thou shalt change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto Thy glorious Body, according to the working whereby Thou art able even to subdue all things unto Thyself.

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## CHAPTER IV

### *OF THE FIRST PART OF THE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION*

“This do in remembrance of me.”—[LUKE xxii. 19]

WE have now reached the culminating point of the whole Rite. The Consecration and Administration of the Elements may be called the nucleus of the Ordinance, round which grow up and gather the various

forms of Devotion through which we have passed, and are to pass. And as the seed contains the germ of the whole plant, so this central part of the Office is a little miniature, or short draught of the whole. All that is to be known about the Lord's Supper is given us here in brief and abridgment.

Before making the actual celebration of the Death of Christ, the minister produces his warrant for making it. This is done in the first part of the prayer of Consecration, upon which alone we shall at present have time to comment: "Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of thy tender mercy didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption; who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious Death, until his coming again." In the second Chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians St. Paul speaks slightly of will-worship. By will-worship is meant the paying homage to Almighty God after a fashion devised by ourselves, and not dictated by His Word. It is the worshipping Him according to the leanings of our own will, not according to the intimations which He has been pleased to make to us of His. Because will-worship is so offensive to God, and because we may not presume without sin to devise other methods for His service than He has Himself appointed, therefore we are careful in all our solemn acts of Religion, to quote (if I may say so) the authority on which we proceed. Hence in the Absolution of the daily Morning and Evening Prayer, the function is not fulfilled without first reciting the authority on which it is exercised, and its conformity with the revealed mind of God: "Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who . . . hath given power and commandment to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent," &c., &c. And in the Office for the

Solemnization of Matrimony you will find God's Institution of Marriage in the time of man's innocency, and the sanction given to it by Christ's Presence, and first miracle that He wrought in Cana of Galilee, placed in the forefront of the Service.—On a principle precisely similar, when we are about to make before God the memorial of the Death of Christ, by breaking bread, and blessing wine, we recite our authority for so doing, and produce our warrant. And the warrant is this, that "Christ did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death." Great must have been the satisfaction of the pious Israelite in thinking that the worship of the Tabernacle had been expressly prescribed by God, and that a model of all its furniture had been shown to Moses in the Mount. And our satisfaction may reasonably be great in reflecting that this holy Ordinance is a memorial designed, not by man, but by the Lord Himself; by One who knows our nature and our wants better than we ourselves know them; and who took care, before He left us, to furnish us richly with all those means of grace, which we should need as channels of communication with Him during the time of His absence. It would not have been otherwise than pious and devout, if the Lord had left behind no memorial of His Death, to appoint and observe some season for calling it specially to mind, and reviving our impressions in connexion with it. But upon such an observance we could not have hoped for any special blessing, although the state of mind from which it took its rise would doubtless have been acceptable to God. As matters stand now, may we not most surely expect that the special grace and Presence of our Lord will accompany our observance of His own Institution, if only our state of mind be in keeping with the occasion?—And again, if will-worship be offensive to God, how must He resent any interference even with the details of the Ordinances, which He has prescribed for our edification! If Christ has said, "Drink ye *all* of this," how offensive, what an insult

to His authority must it be to say that none but the officiating Priest shall drink of it, under the sorry pretext that desecration is thereby hazarded by spilling some particle of the wine ! One form of will-worship is, no doubt, to invent something where God has prescribed nothing. But surely it is another and more culpable form to alter and abrogate, where God has expressly prescribed.

Our Liturgy is very exhaustive (though very brief) in its treatment of subjects ; and therefore the warrant for the celebration of the Holy Supper is not barely stated in the passage before us ; on the contrary, the Ordinance is carried up to its source, and down to the term prescribed for it. As a warrant for thus commemorating the Lord's Death, we have His own institution and command. What is the nature of the Death thus commemorated ? What is the source and origin of it ? For how long is the commemoration appointed to last ? All these questions are summarily, but completely, answered in the section of the Prayer now before us. The death of Christ is a " full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." It had its origin in the " tender mercy " of God, who gave His Son to be a propitiation for our sins. It is to be commemorated in this manner, until the second Advent of the Saviour supersedes the necessity for it,—“ till He come.”

1. The Death of Christ is declared to be a sufficient sacrifice for sinners ; a perfect oblation on His part (an oblation in which was no flaw nor blemish) ; and a full satisfaction to God. The sinner requires something,—a sacrifice. Christ presents something,—an oblation. God demands something,—a satisfaction. See how exact the language is, and how it appears to have been written for the purpose of rebutting, and putting out of court the evasions of modern Rationalism. Observe that the aspect of Our Lord's Death as an example, because it was not the leading or main feature of it, is dropped altogether, does not present itself at all upon the field of view. Most true it is

(and most precious truth) that Our Blessed Lord was an example in His death, as well as in His life; most true also (conversely) that all His sufferings, and all His obedience, and not His death only, were atoning; but still the great glory, and virtue, and efficacy of His Death, the distinctive feature of it, that which no other death of human being ever had in common with it, is its sacrificial and propitiatory character. It is not as an example that we now commemorate His death, but as the ransom of our souls.

Again, observe how the language is so constructed as not to allow any evasion of the doctrine, that the Holiness, Justice, and Truth of God demanded this Death. It was not only a sacrifice, intrinsically noble and generous in the highest degree; it was not only a pure and acceptable oblation; but a satisfaction also. If so, there must be a party to be satisfied; and this party can be none other than God: there must be something analogous to a debt on our part, the creditor being God, and the Person who has made full payment or satisfaction, Christ. This is the primitive, old, and ordinary view of the Atonement; and although, no doubt, there are many deep mysteries in the transaction which the human reason can never solve, I cannot but think that the grounds usually assigned for the necessity of Our Lord's Death were very well established, till a perverse ingenuity, and a culpable inquisitiveness, which will acquiesce in no mystery, came and disturbed them, and threw them all into confusion. If God is the moral Governor and Judge of the world, (as who can doubt that He is?) surely He is bound to make His law respected. And this obligation creates a real difficulty as to the pardon of a transgressor, however strongly the tender mercy of God might urge Him to such pardon. Persons entrusted with the administration of justice in an earthly community know what it is to long to spare a criminal, but to be effectually checked by the question rising up before them and haunting them, "*Can I spare, consistently not only with the good of the community, but with justice and*

right?" Conceive the Lawgiver and the Law both perfect (as in God's case they are), and the hindrance to the showing mercy is immensely aggravated.

Now, that a duly-constituted Representative of our race (being also a Divine Person) should have succeeded in removing this hindrance, by substituting Himself in the place of sinners, and receiving the pains and penalties of sin upon His own head, in such a manner as that all who are truly joined to Him have undergone the penalty, and paid the debt, in His sufferings,—this is indeed far above Reason; but surely there is nothing whatsoever in it contrary to, or out of conformity with, Reason. The doctrine runs parallel with Reason so far as our faculties enable us to pursue the subject; but, like all the doctrines of Revelation, it is found, when followed out, to abut upon mystery; and he who is determined, not merely to get a glimpse into its reasonableness, but to reduce it, in all its parts, within the compass of his understanding, resembles a man who should undertake to trace a telegraphic wire along its whole course: for a while it runs parallel to the earth, and he has no difficulty in reaching it; but ere long it takes a dip into the ocean, or stretches across a ravine, where he can neither follow it, nor say at what point it issues.

Observe, also, how carefully the Roman doctrine of the repetition of the Sacrifice of the Cross is fenced off by the allusion made in the words, "His *one* oblation of Himself *once* offered," to St. Paul's assertion in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." To offer another sacrifice for sin, or to offer this a second time, is impossible; the words of Inspiration exclude for ever the impious pretensions of the Roman Priesthood. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." All that the Church on earth can do is to prolong through all time in the ears of God and man, the echoes of the One Sacrifice once offered on Calvary. The image, I

believe, is an accurate one, and conveys the truth on this great subject as far as figurative language can do so. A sound is not really repeated, it is not made a second time, when the echoes of it are caught up by neighbouring rocks and hills, and it is reverberated from peak to peak. Reverberation is not repetition, though it may be called so in a loose and popular way. And the perpetual memory of the Sacrifice of Calvary in the Sacrament of the Eucharist is indeed a reverberation, but in no sense a repetition, of the Sacrifice of the Cross. The Sacrifice was fully accomplished, when Our Lord cried with His latest breath, "It is finished." All that remains is, that Christ should plead it for us in Heaven above, that the Church (which is His Body) should plead it on earth below. This pleading takes place most emphatically, and under the especial sanction of a Divine Ordinance, in the Lord's Supper, when Jesus Christ is evidently set forth before our eyes crucified amongst us.

2. But again. This introduction of the Prayer of Consecration carries us up to the source of the Sacrifice of Christ, and so rebuts another serious error, which (as is always found to be the case) has given rise to error in another direction. The heresies of Rationalism on the subject of the Atonement are due in great part, if not entirely, to the frightful and repulsive picture of God the Father, which used to be drawn by those who professed to represent the true Evangelical scheme. It was too often insinuated in the works and sermons of these divines, that the First Person of the Blessed Trinity wore always a frown towards mankind; was, in fact, a stern tyrant, with no other aspect towards transgressors than that of unmitigated severity. It was the fashion, and it became (strange to say) the orthodox Shibboleth, to connect the thought of grace, mercy, and peace, exclusively with the Second Person, and to see in the character of the First nothing but judgment and vengeance. No heresy can well be more unscriptural in its theory, or more mischievous in its practical effects. The Love of God is the source of all



virtue ; and what soul can be persuaded to love God, and to render to Him the homage of affectionate obedience, so long as it sees in Him no fatherly yearning over the fallen, no bowels of mercies ;— nothing but a stern insisting upon duty, and a prompt readiness to avenge all disobedience? The Scriptures represent the Sacrifice of Christ not only as essential to satisfy God's demands, but as itself flowing from the tender mercy and love of God. Delightful and most consolatory thought! The Sacrifice is as valuable for what it proves, as for what it effects. It shows clearly that there exists in God a boundless Love, which scrupled not at the only gift which could be a sacrifice on God's part, the gift of His Son. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It wrings God's fatherly heart with pain, when a sinner perishes. Rather than that such a thing should be, He gives, He has given, His Son, parted with Him for a time, in some mysterious manner, that He might bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. Can there be by possibility a greater encouragement to prayer, to penitence, to faith, to affection, to every gracious temper, and every spiritual exercise? If it had not been for God's Love, there would have been no Sacrifice for sin. The Love of God is the source, the Sacrifice is the stream. The Love of God is the root, the Sacrifice is the tree. The Love of God is the foundation, the Sacrifice is the superstructure. Our Church therefore, in setting forth the Sacrifice, thinks that it cannot be fully and fairly represented except in this aspect, as evidencing the boundless compassion for man, which finds place in God's fatherly heart. So when the Sacrifice is to be celebrated, and the memorial of it solemnly made (according to the Lord's appointment) with bread and wine, the first thing to be done is to travel up to the source of this inestimable benefit, and to rehearse and commemorate the tender love, which so longed for our recovery as not to keep back

from us the most precious thing it had; and the rehearsal is made after this manner: "Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who *of thy tender mercy* didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption."

Is it not marvellous how our formularies, if examined and weighed, are found to fence off error at every point of the charmed circle of truth, at which error can possibly insinuate itself?

3. But again. As this introductory clause of the Prayer carries us up to the source of the Sacrifice of Christ, so it carries us down to the period when that Sacrifice shall no longer need to be pleaded, because the Mediatorial Kingdom will then have ceased, and the sin which still remains in the universe will not admit of expiation and atonement. The reverberation of the Sacrifice of Calvary is to sound along the whole course of time, to be made in the ears of generations yet unborn, and to carry down to a distant posterity the accents of the love of God and the grace of Christ. But there must be, at the time decreed in the Divine counsels, a last generation. Time itself must have an end; its great clock must strike the world's last hour, and then run down. And this will be at the second coming of our Lord to this planet, which the Church should live in constant expectation of and preparation for. On His arrival, all showing forth of His death shall cease, as it is written: "Ye do shew the Lord's death *till he come.*" And the rationale of this cessation it is not difficult to trace. In the first place, the memorial of an absent friend is naturally superseded upon his return. We do not need pictures, or rings, or tokens of affection, to remind us of those who are constantly by our sides in the daily intercourse of life; we say naturally enough, "I possess himself; I do not need his picture." Now so far as the Lord's Supper is a memorial, designed to affect our minds with a lively remembrance of all He did and suffered for us, the necessity for it must of course be superseded by His return. When we have

the Bridegroom of our souls amongst us again, we shall not need any longer the picture, the token which He left behind. When we look with our own eyes upon the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, and on the spear-wound in His side, what need of the broken bread and outpoured wine to remind us of those precious stigmata?

But we have already intimated more than once, that the Eucharist has several higher aspects than that of a memorial, that it is far more than merely a means of affecting our own minds by a sensible representation of Christ's Death. Just as prayer is not only valuable for its efficacy in calming the spirit, and soothing the troubled heart, not only valuable as a conduit whereby the grace of God is conveyed into our souls, but also is to be regarded as an act of homage, and thus has an aspect altogether independent of human wants and human infirmities; so the Holy Communion is not only valuable for its effects upon our mind, but has also a mysterious aspect towards God, and sounds in His ears, as in the ears of man, the echo of His Son's One Sacrifice. And in this aspect of it also it will cease, when the Lord comes. For sin will then be abolished out of the heart of God's people; so that they will need no longer the pleading of any sacrifice in expiation of it. And as regards the sin of the impenitent, it will be (as I have said) stereotyped in the transgressor; and the benefits of the Sacrifice having been by them deliberately refused, there will no longer remain for them any prospect of reconciliation. The Eucharist is bound up in the system of mediation between God and man, which is negotiated by the Sacrifice of Christ; and when that system falls to the ground, the Eucharist must of necessity fall with it.

In the clause which we have now considered, our Liturgy seems to place us at a point of view high above the course of Time, at which we may contemplate human history at its beginning and its close, and

see the origin and the issue of the great scheme of Salvation. In the centre of human history is planted the Cross, the alone meritorious cause of every blessing which has reached our race. But this Cross we see to have been first devised in the counsels of Eternity,—devised, long ages before it was erected, by the tender mercy of Our Heavenly Father. This accursed (and yet blessed) tree is seen bearing its beautiful fruits in the experience of man along the course of ages, until the number of the elect is accomplished, and the last saved soul is gathered into the garner of God. Meanwhile Hope and Memory, both of them under the sanction of Divine Ordinances, lead up to this central point, the Cross, and find life and vigour there. Hope was nourished by the sacrifices of the Jewish ritual, ordained of God to foreshadow the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction which Christ made upon the tree. Memory is nourished by the Sacraments of the Gospel, ordained to represent after the fact the very event, which the sacrifices had before represented more obscurely.

Reader, is this Death our one point of sight, as it is God's? Do we live in it in any true sense: derive from it strength against temptation, energy for renewed efforts, hope in difficulties, comfort in troubles? Is it a real spring of moral action within us, the strongest incentive to holiness, the most effectual dissuasive from sin? O God, make us to know the fellowship of Thy Son's sufferings, to feel the power of His death, mortifying in us all our evil and corrupt affections, and crucifying us to the world and to sin; so that, when He shall appear, we, who have been already planted together with Him in the likeness of His death, may be also in the likeness of His resurrection.

## CHAPTER V

*OF THE CONSECRATION OF THE ELEMENTS*

“For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

I TIM. iv. 4, 5

THE body of the Prayer of Consecration consists of two members. First, there is a petition for our participation in the blessings of the Ordinance: “Hear us, O merciful Father, we most humbly beseech thee; and grant that we, receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine, according to thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ’s holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood.” After this, the history of the Institution is recited; and the very actions employed by Our Lord on the occasion are repeated in the course of this recital, the vessels containing either element being taken into the hands of the Priest, the Bread being broken by him, and, finally, his hand being laid upon the Bread and Cup, as a sign that they are now blessed and hallowed. Both the Prayer and the recital have, from the earliest ages of the Church’s history, been considered essential to a valid consecration. The Roman Church in this, as in so many other points, deviates from Primitive Antiquity, maintaining that Consecration is effected by a mere repetition of the words, “This is my Body,” “This is my Blood.” And as it is not unfrequently the case that extremes meet, so we shall find here that sundry Protestant sects, who have gone as far as possible from Rome both in doctrine and discipline, hold the recital of the words of Institution to be the only requisite. The Church of England holds closer both to primitive practice, and to the example of our Lord. She uses a

“*Prayer* of Consecration,” implying surely by the very title that prayer is essential; and does not proceed to recite the history or the words of the Institution, until she has addressed to our Heavenly Father a fervent petition for the great blessing of the Ordinance. St. Paul says, in reference to our ordinary reception of food, that “every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God” (that is, by some passage of Holy Scripture introduced into the grace before meat) “and prayer.” And our Church holds, as the early Church did, that this heavenly food must be sanctified in the same manner, not only by reciting from the Scriptures the very words of Institution, but also by *thanksgiving* for God’s tender mercy, and Christ’s all-sufficient Sacrifice, and by *prayer*, that this Ordinance, which echoes on the Sacrifice to the end of time, may be an effectual instrument of communicating the virtue of it to our souls. And a close study of Our Lord’s practice in instituting the Holy Supper leads us to the same conclusion. The Evangelists expressly say that He gave thanks, before He used the words, “This is my body,” “This is my blood of the new testament,”—addressing Himself to God over the Bread and over the Cup in the first instance, before He gave them to the disciples as His Body and Blood.

The sum and substance of what has been said is, that an address to God in the form of Prayer and Thanksgiving has from the earliest times been regarded, and justly regarded, as essential to Consecration.

To some, no doubt, the point will seem a very unimportant one, more especially if they are unfamiliar with the history of Liturgical controversy. But under questions which present to an ordinary mind the appearance of being mere subtleties,—not worth the raising, and certainly not worth the controverting,—there occasionally lie hid great principles, which are at issue; and we believe that it is so in the present instance. The whole history of the Lord’s Supper, culminating as it does in

the error of Transubstantiation, shows a sad tendency in the human mind to localize and materialize the blessing of the Ordinance,—I mean by localizing and materializing the blessing, the placing it entirely in the outward visible sign, the imagining some mysterious charm,—a virtue half-physical, half-spiritual,—to reside in the crumbs of bread, and in the drops of wine. The Lutheran doctrine of Consubstantiation is quite as open to this charge as the bolder and more unreasonable error of the Church of Rome. And there can be no doubt that many members of our own Communion, in the views they take of the subject, attach the blessing far too little to the Ordinance itself, and far too exclusively to the sensible, material vehicle of the Ordinance. The mysterious operation upon the Bread and Wine, by which they are sanctified for their high significance and office, engrosses in their minds the whole field of view; and the operations of and upon the human spirit, which the Ordinance is designed to call forth and develope, go for nothing in their estimate. The natural superstitiousness of the human heart, (for it is most superstitious,) gathers round the material and local, and the mental and the moral are thrown into the background. One can fancy a similar debasement of idea in connexion with the Person of our Blessed Lord. It was, of course, a most exalted privilege to the Apostles, and the source of great blessings to the inhabitants of the Holy Land, among whom He went about doing good, to have Our Lord with them, and in the midst of them. His sacred Body was the source of natural health to thousands of poor patients who touched it, and His teaching was the source of spiritual health to those who listened to it. But supposing that in those days some of His disciples had attached to the mere Body of our Lord, independently of any action of mind on the part of those who heard Him and applied to Him, the blessings of His presence in the world. Supposing they had heeded scarcely at all the gracious words which fell from His lips, and had imagined that the mere fact of His neighbourhood in

the body would prove a sort of talisman of health to the whole district in which He sojourned. Would He not have most seriously reproved such notions? Did He not virtually and implicitly reprove them, when He required faith from all patients as the one condition of their cure, that is, an operative persuasion of the mind on their part that He was able and willing to relieve them? In no case does Christ heal without this preliminary condition; wherever persons apply to Him for healing, the application itself of course implies the persuasion on their part; but never is the healing granted as the mere result of material contact with His Person. Faith and prayer were the conductors, without which the virtue that was in Him could not reach the bodies of the suffering; an awakened mind and a docile heart were the conductors, without which the spiritual blessings of His Divine Ministry were not, and could not be realized. Now this illustrates very well the caution we are now attempting to give in reference to the elements in the Supper of the Lord. We need not deny, rather we would clearly and strongly affirm, that they are not mere symbols, but stand in some real (though mysterious) relation to the blessing of the Ordinance. Yet we say that the blessing is not to be materialized, or supposed to reside in the elements, after the manner of a charm. And we find a protest to this effect in the true doctrine of the Consecration of the Elements. The mere recital of the formulary, the mere contact of the hands, is not sufficient by itself,—has never in the best and purest times been held sufficient,—to that Consecration. They are sanctified by the Prayer and Thanksgiving which accompanies their Consecration,—the offering of which implies faith, the only avenue by which any blessing can reach the human soul. When we lift up our hearts to God over a common meal, in acknowledgment of His Bounty in spreading our board with daily food convenient for us, by this action of the mind we sanctify His good gifts to our use. And on a similar principle, when over the oblation of Bread and Wine, destined to become the symbols of the Body and Blood



of Christ, we raise up all our thoughts, desires, and affections to God, and implore Him to make us partakers thereby of the benefits of the great Sacrifice, reciting over them at the same time the history of Christ's Institution,—this is the consecration of the Elements, whereby they are sanctified to that high and holy use which they fulfil towards us. How important, then, at this culminating period of the rite, is a spirit of fervent, earnest, believing prayer, offered with all our heart, and soul, and strength! And in order to the due maintenance of this spirit, we must not only stir up ourselves to pray, chiding our own hearts for their indifference and insensibility, and, if I may so say, following hard after God, but also must study beforehand the words appointed for our use, so that we may pray with the understanding, as well as with the spirit.

Let us look, then, a little more closely at the terms of this petition. Comparing them with the Consecration Prayer used in the first Protestant Prayer Book of 1549 (the terms of which still exist in the Scotch Episcopal Office), we see at once that the petition before us, while we quite believe that it embraces all that is necessary, is very cautiously worded. Formerly it ran thus: "Hear us, O merciful Father, we beseech thee; and with thy Holy Spirit and word vouchsafe to bless and sanctify these thy gifts, and creatures of bread and wine, *that they may be unto us the body and blood of thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ.*" Considered abstractedly, and in themselves, these words were good, sound, and primitive. But our Reformers, looking at the state of controversies in their time, had to consider also *whether they were safe*,—whether an alteration of the terms, while the general sense was retained, might not make them less liable to abuse and perversion. Error—very gross and serious error—had warped the religious mind of the country in one direction, and in order to make it quite straight again, it was necessary to bend it slightly in the other, even at the expense of a phraseology which in itself was sound, and had antiquity in its favour. It was necessary to

disabuse men's minds utterly of the figment that the bread and wine became in a gross and carnal sense the Body and Blood of Christ, and also of the kindred notion that they were talismans, which would exercise a special virtue, independently of the faith of the recipient. Any allusion therefore to the action of the Holy Spirit and Word upon the elements, or to their becoming the Body and Blood of Christ (however capable of justification both by Scripture and primitive usage), it was thought safe to expunge, and simply to ask God for the blessing of the Ordinance, without prescribing to Him the means by which that blessing is to be realized to us. Now the blessing is a real and true participation of the Body and Blood of Christ. And accordingly we ask that "we receiving" (in receiving, while receiving) "these *thy creatures* of bread and wine" (observe how clearly it is here recognized that the Bread and Wine after the Consecration remain in their true and natural substances), "may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood." The prayer is, that the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Bread and Wine may accompany our outward reception of the elements. *How* it is to accompany that reception we leave with God. We do not ask that it may be by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the elements, nor mention any other mode in which He is to communicate to us the virtue of the Sacrament. We ask for the end in the fullest and most explicit terms, and leave the means by which it is to be brought about unnoticed. And indeed, independently of all controversial grounds for thus modifying the terms of the prayer, there is great reverence and reasonableness in framing our petition thus. The Holy Communion is a deep mystery, as indeed are also the lower means of grace in their degree. How or why Prayer moves the Divine will, and how the Divine will, when set in movement, operates upon our hearts or our affairs, who shall say? Much more, then, who shall say how Christ communicates Himself in the sacred Supper to the faithful soul? We are totally in

the dark as to these spiritual operations ; and therefore, while we heartily desire to be the subjects of them, the less we say upon the method and process of them the better. It is dangerous even in temporal matters to prescribe ways and means to God. We may always ask for relief from danger, distress, and necessity ; but it should always be as, and how, and when it pleases Him to bring about the result. And this is a good and sober rule to apply also in our supplications for spiritual blessings. We are no doubt informed by God's Word that these blessings are not to be had without the operation of the Holy Spirit. But it is not always necessary in asking for them to refer to this operation. He who asks for faith, hope, love, patience, or any other grace, does indeed virtually pray for the Holy Spirit, but there is no reason why the Spirit should be expressly referred to. Much more of course is this the case where the precise nature of the spiritual operation is veiled in mystery, as is the case in the Lord's Supper. There it is especially becoming to say nothing as to the mode of operation, to leave altogether to God the answer to the question, "How shall these things be?"

II. But we must now say a word upon the second part of the Consecration, which is admitted on all hands to be essential ; and this is the recital of the history of the Institution, comprising our Lord's words and actions on that occasion. The creatures of God (says St. Paul) "are sanctified," and made fit for man's use, "by the word of God and prayer,"—not by Prayer only, but by the Word of God and Prayer. I have already intimated that by "the word of God" is here meant, in all probability, some appropriate passage of Holy Writ woven into the Grace or Prayer of Thanksgiving, as for example the following: "The eyes of all wait upon thee, O Lord : and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand : and fillest all things living with plenteousness." Over this heavenly food, then, in accordance with the Apostolic precept for the sanctification of our ordinary

meals, are recited the words by which Christ first instituted the Supper,—a fragment this, and a most precious fragment, of the true Word of God. Very much as in the Solemnization of Matrimony the words are rehearsed, by which He engrafted that primitive Ordinance into His new Law: “What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder;” so here also the rehearsal of His words of Institution, “This is my body, which is given for you;” “This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for you,” accomplish and render perfect the great solemnity. Thus in the prayer which precedes the recital, we have man’s fervent petition for the high blessing of the Sacrament; and in the recital itself, we have the benediction we sued for,—God’s correspondence and answer to the petition of His people. Both together, and not one without the other, complete the idea of Consecration. The faithful sue for God’s Word of Blessing. God, by the mouth of His minister, rehearses His Word of Blessing in the ears of the faithful, and the great act is accomplished. The Bread and Wine are sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer.

One word remains to be said respecting the actions which are used during the rehearsal of the words of Institution. These also are founded on the example of our Lord, Who took the Bread and Cup into His Hand, and broke the Bread, before giving it to His disciples. It is observable that, in prescribing these actions, our Ritual is more minute and particular than that of the mediæval Church, or of the Church of Rome. With regard to the breaking of the Bread, the latter has deviated remarkably from the primitive Institution, and from the Scriptural significance of the action, prescribing only the breaking of a single wafer into three parts, two of which parts are consumed by the priest, and the third dropped into the wine,—none of them given to the people. Now it is to be remembered that the breaking of the Bread was, in the time of the Apostles, reckoned so characteristic a feature of this Sacrament, that in the New Testament it goes under

the name of "the breaking of bread;" and that this breaking was for the purpose, not only of signifying the Death of Christ, but also of distribution among the communicants, is abundantly clear from the words of St. Paul: "For we being many are one bread," (one cake or loaf,) "and one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf."—In other words, the sacred loaf, which represents and conveys the Body of Christ, is one; and a portion of it, after it has been broken, passes into each communicant, who thereupon is made one with the Body of Christ or Christian Society. If the Bread be not *really* broken and distributed, we lose altogether the significance of our having fellowship one with another in this Sacrament, in the one Body of Christ. See how the trifling with the little details of a Divine Institution may entirely obscure the great spiritual lessons, which are to be drawn from it, and obliterate one of its leading features. For that the Lord's Supper is a Sacrament not only of Christ's Death, but of the fellowship which in Him we have one with another, is certainly one of its most interesting and important aspects. One loaf has been broken among all of us,—partaken of by all,—and has been the means, if faithfully partaken of, of incorporating us into the one Body of Christ. What circumstance can teach us more forcibly how utterly out of harmony we are with the spirit of the Ordinance, if there rankle at the bottom of our hearts a single particle of ill-will, or hostility towards any of our brethren? What can teach us more forcibly that a real participation of the Body and Blood of Christ will be attended with an increase of love to our brethren, with a greater forbearance towards their infirmities, and a more tender and unselfish consideration for their feelings and prejudices? And indeed by considering how far we have advanced in brotherly kindness and charity, we may test not only our growth in grace generally, but also the amount of profit which we have derived from this blessed Sacrament. It is a very practical and intelligible test; and one which gives us perhaps fewer openings than

any other to deceive ourselves. We may be quite sure that Divine Love is not really strengthened and matured within us, unless brotherly love has made a corresponding growth. For these are two twins, which have a living ligament passing from the heart of the one to that of the other,—a ligament which gives them a sympathy, so that the health or decline of the one is instantly felt by the other. “He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?”

Apply this test to your own heart faithfully, before and after communicating; and you shall ascertain both how far you are a worthy recipient, and how far also you have benefited by this inestimable privilege, and turned it to good account in the Spiritual Life.

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## CHAPTER VI

### *THE DOCTRINE OF THE EUCHARIST*

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”—I COR. x. 16

THE history of the Apostolic Church, as given in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, may be said to be a model and miniature of all that was to come after in Ecclesiastical History. In the Apostles and their associates we find patterns of the different characters and endowments of Christians down to the end of time; after ages only offering feebler repetitions of what those holy men were. In St. John, the devout and meditative Christian; in St. Paul, the extensively active and influential Christian; in St. Peter, the enthusiastic Christian, with strong will and abilities for administration; in Barnabas, the quiet and gentle Christian, whose voice soothes the mourner; in Apollos, the eloquent teacher, who kindles with his lofty theme: in Timotheus, the

disciple who has imbibed the principles of true religion from a mother's precepts, combined with a mother's prayers,—are respectively exemplified. And as it is with characters, so it is with heresies, contradictions, controversies, and movements in the Church. A little model and miniature of all these movements (very perfect and exact, as models and miniatures are) is to be found in the primitive Church while yet it was under inspired government. There was a Rationalistic party in the Sadducees. And there was a Romanizing party,—Romanizing, I mean, in tendency and spirit, before the Church of Rome was ever heard of,—among the Pharisees. There was a strong Antinomian party, denounced and censured by St. James. There was a strong party who stood up for justification by human merit, demolished a thousand times over by St. Paul, so that one would think (although the event has not justified the anticipation) that they never could have held up their heads again. There was a philosophical party, called Gnostics, who adulterated the faith by spurious admixtures of Rabbinical and Oriental speculations, against whom St. John, the great speculative divine of Inspiration, directed all his strength. And, finally, there was in those days the free-grace and free-will controversy (called in these modern times Calvinistic and Arminian), which the holy Apostles left without any logical adjustment, making statements which looked in both directions: so that the result of all Biblical research on that moot point has been well and tersely summed up thus: "Calvinists and Arminians are both right and both wrong; they are right in what they assert, and wrong in what they deny."

And was there any controversy on the subject of the Eucharist in the time of the Apostles, as there has been much since? No formal controversy on this great subject even showed its head,—much less came to a crisis,—till the eighth century of the Christian Era. But still there were the elements of Eucharist controversy in the Apostolic Church, though they were not

for a long time to receive their full development. Modern views on the subject err either in excess or defect; the Lord's Supper is either unduly exalted (which is the tendency of all Roman and Romanizing Theology), or unduly depreciated (which is the error of the Protestant sects). Now it is clear that the last of these errors found itself represented in the Corinthian Church in the time of St. Paul. Their flagrant desecration of the Ordinance could not possibly have consisted with any high view of it. Those who snatched their own portion of the common Supper, before the communicants had fully assembled, and the entertainment had been formally opened, could not have regarded with much reverence the sacred Institution, which was to form part of that supper. They looked upon it too familiarly (though one would think the very solemn words of Institution would have acted as a sufficient safeguard against desecration); the Ordinance had dropped in their estimation to the level of a very common thing. Accordingly, St. Paul sets himself to put it on a higher level in their minds, that it might be out of reach of their desecration. For before he enters on their abuse of it in the eleventh Chapter, he expounds, in another connexion, the nature and dignity of the Sacrament in the tenth: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" And still in the eleventh Chapter he harps on the dignity of the Ordinance: he speaks of their eating and drinking unworthily, in consequence of their not discerning the Lord's Body, *i.e.* not appreciating the mystery of it, not distinguishing between it and a common meal. And the guilt incurred by an irreverent and indiscriminating reception is painted by him in these frightfully strong colours: "Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And he points out that this guilt would be, and in their case had been, followed by certain temporal judgments of God upon



the offenders, sickness and death, which judgments, he says, were corrective, and designed to bring the Corinthian Church to a right mind. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh" (the word "damnation" in our Authorized Version, which has given rise to so much false alarm, is well known by all scholars to be a thoroughly inaccurate rendering) "a judgment unto himself." The kind of judgment is immediately explained in the verse next following: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (*i.e.* sleep in death). And the merciful design of the judgment (which was in order to avert eternal condemnation) is subjoined: "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned" (here the word "condemned" is perfectly right) "with the world."

Now this manner of writing on the part of St. Paul, —the Apostle, generally speaking, not so much of Ordinance as of faith,—gave the first impulse to a reaction in the minds of Christians on the subject of the Lord's Supper. His Apostolic word had disentangled the Eucharist from the supper with which it was once associated; had placed it in a shrine of its own; had declared its true nature as a participation of the Body and Blood of Christ; and had pointed out the sad consequences of desecrating it. From that time forth, there arose in the Church a strong tendency to exalt the Eucharist, which, like most strong tendencies, became, as time went on, grossly exaggerated, and resulted at length in what may be rightly called the deification of the Ordinance. Thus in the Apostolic Church we find a party which irreverently derogated from the dignity of the Lord's Supper; and we also find, in St. Paul's censure of this party, the origin of the tendency which resulted in an undue exaltation of it. For indeed, in that Apostolic Church, as I have said, were the seeds of all future Ecclesiastical History.

It will be well, in endeavouring to expound the Scriptural and Church of England doctrine of the

Eucharist, to state briefly and clearly the two extreme views (you may call them, for the sake of a name, the rationalizing and Romanizing views) between which the truth lies.

1. What may be called the rationalizing view of the Lord's Supper acknowledges no mystery in the transaction. It is all, according to this view, as plain as day. Just as a dying father gathers his children round his death-bed, and gives them each his blessing, and puts into the hand of each some little token by which, when he is gone, they may call him to mind, so, it is said, the Everlasting Father, when on the eve of leaving those whom He so lovingly called His "little children," instituted a certain rite for their observance, which rite was purely and merely commemorative, answered (and was designed to answer) no other purpose towards them than that of reminding them in a lively manner, through the senses, of the blessed Body which had been broken, and the precious Blood which had been spilled for them. No one denies, you will observe, that this commemoration *is* one great object of the Holy Communion. But the divines whose views we are now representing, maintain this to have been its *exclusive* object, and that this account of the Ordinance exhausts the subject. With regard to the words of Institution; "This is my body;" "This is my blood;" it is maintained that they are to be taken figuratively; "This bread is a *figure* of my body," "This wine is a *figure* of my blood;" and instances are adduced from the Scriptures, where the substantive verb "*is*" has a similar meaning to that which is here imposed upon it; as for example, "The seven good kine *are* seven years" (that is, represent, or stand for, seven years); "The seed *is* the word of God;" "The harvest *is* the end of the world;" (meaning that the seed and the harvest, in the parables where they occur, represent, respectively the word of God and the end of the world;) and so forth.

Now, perhaps, had it not been for the Apostle Paul, we might think this view capable of a tolerable recon-

ciliation with Holy Scripture. He, however, was appointed by God to bring out more clearly, and define more exactly, the words of Institution, which his Divine Master had employed. And be it observed, that St. Paul's style of writing is not imaginative or rhetorical, but logical, closely argued, and, generally speaking, as far removed as possible from the figurative. Thus he paraphrases (and in paraphrasing points out the true force of) the words, in which the Ordinance had been instituted. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion" (participation) "of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

He does not say, "Is it not a figure or representation of the Body and Blood of Christ" (though this would have been perfectly intelligible and perfectly true); his words go far beyond this in strength and mysteriousness; he says, "Is it not a *communication of, a means of participating in,* the Body and Blood of Christ?" Now what is the utmost you could say with truth of the miniature of a deceased parent? You might say no doubt, "This miniature reminds me of my dear father and mother, and brings back especially to my mind that painful hour when they forsook me, having first committed me to His care, who is the Protector of orphans." But no man, speaking prose and sober sense, could possibly say of such a miniature: "My looking on this miniature is a means, whereby I hold intercourse with the spirit of my departed parent in Paradise." It is perhaps just conceivable that in very highflown and extravagant poetry some such idea might be insinuated; but the Epistle to the Corinthians is not poetry; and even if it were, where the Holy Ghost is the speaker, and the faith of the Catholic Church on the most important Ordinance of Religion is the thing to be determined by His verdict, His speech will surely be in all truth, and soberness, and exactitude.

Thus the view that the Eucharistic Rite is simply commemorative, and the Consecrated Elements merely

figures, is excluded at once and for ever by the plain language of the Apostle Paul.

And our Church faithfully and devoutly echoes his language, telling us in the Catechism that “the Body and Blood of Christ are *verily and indeed*” (not in an empty figure and barren ceremony, but “*verily and indeed*”) “taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper;” and in the Twenty-eighth Article, that “the Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another; but rather it is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ’s death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise, the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.”

2. We now come to the Romanizing view of the Eucharist, which culminates, or finds its extreme form, in the dogma called “Transubstantiation.” I will represent, as shortly and plainly as I can, what well-instructed Romanists mean by that dogma, observing, first, that their views on this, and other points of Theology, are often much misapprehended and misrepresented by Protestants.

Transubstantiation, as our Twenty-eighth Article well defines it, means the “change of *the substance* of Bread and Wine in the Supper of the Lord.” Observe; the change of the *substance*, not the change of the *phenomena*. There is one great change of natural substance, recorded in the Scriptures of truth, which may help us to a clear understanding of the matter in hand. At the wedding of Cana in Galilee, our Lord changed water into wine,—into wine, of a quality and flavour superior to any which the guests had yet partaken of. Now if we were to ask a Romanist whether the change effected in the elements by the Priest’s consecration of them is of the same kind as the change which passed upon the water in the six water-pots of stone at Cana, he would say, because in truth he could say nothing else; “Not exactly. I believe

that the transformation wrought by the Priest is as great a miracle as that wrought by Our Lord on the occasion you refer to, but *not as capable of being appreciated by the senses*. The water at Cana, when changed into wine, had the taste and colour of wine. Whereas the Bread and Wine after consecration, though changed (as I believe) into the literal Body and Blood of Christ, still retain the taste and colour of Bread and Wine. It is the substance which I believe to be changed, not the phenomena which meet the senses. Everything which meets the senses remains just as it was before." In short, the Romanist avails himself of an old philosophical distinction broached by Aristotle, and gravely questioned in modern times by Locke, between the substance and the accidents in things material. All matter was supposed to have, in addition to those properties which reach the senses (such as shape, colour, smell, taste, consistency, and so forth), some inward nucleus or substance, which could neither be seen, heard, tasted, smelt, nor felt. This old philosophical distinction was found a mighty convenience by Roman Divines. For when their adversaries asked them how the Bread and Wine could be changed into Flesh and Blood, without having the appearance and taste of flesh and blood, they furbished up Aristotle's old distinction, and made a controversial weapon out of it, saying that the substance of the Bread and Wine was changed into another substance, but that the phenomena, that is, the taste, the smell, the colour, the consistency, remain the same as ever. And this is the form in which the Council of Trent has stereotyped the dogma.

Of this dogma our Church most wisely says, first, that it "cannot be proved by holy Writ." It is of course utterly vain to seek in Scripture for the philosophical distinctions and technicalities, which constitute the real ground of the Romanist's position. Scripture gives us food for the heart, not metaphysical cobwebs to entangle the mind. But there is another and most fatal objection to the acceptance of any such

distinctions; which is this. Once grant that things are not what they seem to be, and that habitually the human senses are imposed upon by the appearance of Bread and Wine, where there is really nothing but Flesh and Blood; and you cut away the evidence of the Resurrection of Christ, and so supplant the whole of Christianity. Has not God consecrated the evidence of our senses, by resting the proof of the Resurrection of His dear Son on the testimony of veracious persons, who *saw* Him and ate with Him after He was risen? And if God has consecrated this evidence, am I at liberty to tamper with it by foolish subtleties, which open a breach in the fortress of Christianity, whereby the infidel may easily enter?

Next, our Church asserts that it is “repugnant to the plain words of Scripture.” So far from being annihilated by Consecration (as the Romanists pretend), the bread is expressly called “bread” by St. Paul *after* Consecration: “As often as ye eat this *bread*, and drink this *cup*, ye do show forth the Lord’s death till he come.” “Whosoever shall eat this *bread*, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” And if the words are to be so literally pressed, we must, according to one version of them, say that the cup is the New Testament, which is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole principle of interpretation.—And further, in Our Lord’s first administration of the Ordinance, how could the bread, which He held in His hand, be His Body in the literal and carnal sense of the words? which single argument ought for ever to have put to flight so monstrous an absurdity.

Finally, our Church asserts that “Transubstantiation overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament.” For a Sacrament has two parts, “an outward visible sign, and an inward spiritual grace.” And if you maintain that the substance of Bread and Wine is annihilated in the Lord’s Supper (which the Romanists pretend) you leave only the thing signified, and destroy the sign.

What then is the true doctrine of the Eucharist, moving between these two extremes,—the doctrine announced by Holy Scripture, and faithfully echoed by our Church? Nothing more nor less than this, that “the cup of blessing which we bless, is the communion” (means of participating in) “of the blood of Christ; and that the bread which we break, is the communion” (means of participating in) “of the body of Christ.” The elements are the medium of our Communion with Christ in some way altogether mysterious, supersensual, heavenly, and divine,—not to be comprehended by the human reason, and therefore not to be expressed by human definitions. If it be asked what it is which gives the elements this character, the answer is, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the Consecration. Why are we afraid of the Apostle’s own words, because Rome has perverted them? “The cup of blessing, WHICH WE BLESS,” (there is the Consecration,) “is it not” (in virtue of such Blessing) “the communion of the blood of Christ?” “The bread WHICH WE BREAK,” (and the Bread is broken in the course of the Prayer of Consecration,) “is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” Why should we be afraid of the precise and admirable language of our own Twenty-eighth Article: “The Body of Christ is *given* in the Supper” (observe, the words are “given, taken, and eaten;” and it is clear from the following sentence, where the receiving and eating only—not the giving—are said to be by faith, that the “giving” must be by Consecration) “only after an heavenly and spiritual manner?” If it be asked what it is in us, which lays hold of this gift, appropriates it, assimilates it, makes it a strength and a refreshment to the soul, the answer is perfectly clear,—“faith.” Without faith there is no blessing, and no receptivity of blessing, to the individual. Without faith, in no wise is the recipient of the consecrated elements a partaker of Christ, but “rather to” his “condemnation” he doth “eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing.” For “the mean whereby the Body of

Christ is received and eaten" (not "given," observe, but "received and eaten") "in the Supper is Faith." The faithless communicant resembles the crowd who thronged and pressed our Lord's natural Body, without partaking of any benefit whatever. The faithful communicant resembles that poor woman, who, by touching the hem of His garment, drew forth an instantaneous cure.

Postponing to another Chapter the further development and illustration of this important doctrine, let me conclude this first part of the subject with some reflections on the thankfulness which it behoves us to feel for the position, which Divine Providence has assigned to us as members of the Church of England. If well-balanced views of Scriptural Truth, equally remote from the Romanizing and rationalizing tendencies of the day, if the union of Scriptural Doctrine with Apostolic Discipline, be any security for the soundness of our faith and the steadiness of our religious principles in these dangerous days, surely we, whose Prayer Books furnish us with such views, and whose ecclesiastical Constitution presents this happy union, ought to be thoroughly fortified, under God's blessing, against errors and innovations. But, alas! it must be confessed with shame and sorrow, the great majority of English Churchmen only yield their Church a nominal allegiance; their Churchmanship is not at all the result of choice and reflection, but the merest accident of their position. Where will you find a discriminating appreciation of the excellence of our Liturgy, Catechism, and Articles? Could our Services be so cold, so thinly attended (except where there happens to be a popular preacher—another name often for a showy and unsound one), and so languidly responded to, if people had given the least amount of careful study to their Prayer Books? Alas! all that the great majority know of the Book, which is for them the interpreter of Holy Scripture, is derived from hearing the Morning and Evening Prayer read in their ears every Sunday, and from some hazy disagreeable



reminiscences of the quaint English of the Catechism, when administered to them as a lesson in youth. The Thirty-nine Articles many have literally never heard, except when accidentally present at the "reading in" of a new Incumbent; and if it happens that they have assisted at a christening, a wedding, or a funeral, the interest which those occasions naturally have to the feelings of persons even remotely concerned in them, has quite swallowed up all thought of the precious truths embodied in and proclaimed by the Ritual,—truths adapted to the sanctification of the various periods of human life.

And thus it comes to pass that, in the midst of some notorious extravagances in the direction of Rome, and in the direction of Latitudinarianism, which it is fashionable to decry, the religion of the majority of our people is of a low type,—a religion intolerant indeed of Romanism and Rationalism, but having no real ground of its own to stand upon, and consisting merely in a few impressions derived from sermons, and a few evangelical phraseologies picked up from books,—a religion whose creed, if it had a creed at all, would probably run thus: "I believe that faith is the only grace, and that preaching is the only ordinance." Surely the devout and attentive study of the Prayer Book would lead us to some better and more definite form of Religion than this; would give us more especially those hard and clear conceptions of Christian Doctrine, which must after all be the nerves and stamina of practical religion. A religion of mere sentiment will break down under stress of trial; we need in that hour a religion of well-ascertained principles, which we have tested by bringing them to the criterion of Truth.

In view of this want of definiteness and consistency in the popular views of Christianity, it would be well if our Clergy devoted a regular portion of their teaching to the illustration and explanation of the Offices of the Church. The field would offer ample variety, as well as topics of the greatest interest. And while, in

the course of such teaching, every part of Scriptural Truth would be handled in its turn, it would be handled practically, and worked into the devotional life of the hearer. What teaching can be more practical, than that which enables a man to pray more intelligently, and with a fuller meaning than he has hitherto done?

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## CHAPTER VII

### *THE BLESSING OF THE EUCHARIST, WITH A FURTHER ILLUSTRATION OF ITS DOCTRINE*

“He that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit.”

I COR. vi. 17

**I**N our last Chapter we traced out the rationalizing and Romanizing views of the doctrine of the Eucharist, and then showed how the Scriptural doctrine, faithfully echoed by our Church, steers clear of both these errors.

The error both of Rationalists and Romanists has, strange as it may appear to say so, a common principle, which it is necessary for the full illustration of our subject that we should point out. Observe, then, that neither Rationalist nor Romanist acknowledges a mystery in the Eucharist. The Rationalist avows explicitly that there is no mystery; that Christ's words of Institution are to be taken figuratively; that the elements are mere emblems of Christ's Body and Blood, and nothing more; that the rite is merely commemorative. The Romanist equally abolishes the mystery, though in another way; as the Rationalist had eluded the mystery by a figurative, so he no less eludes it by a gross and carnal, interpretation. This Bread, he says, becomes substantially Flesh; and this Wine becomes substantially Blood. In that case there is no mystery in our reception of Christ's Body and Blood in the

Eucharist; we press with our teeth that which is flesh; we taste with our tongue that which is blood; there is nothing mysterious here; but merely a carnal animal process, the very notion of which shocks our feelings of reverence as well as our common sense. On the other hand, we of the English Church hold that while, on the one hand, the consecrated Bread and Wine remain all along in their true and natural substances, they become by consecration the medium by which every faithful communicant "verily and indeed" (not in figure only) "takes and receives," in some mysterious manner, the Body and Blood of Christ. And if our adversaries ask us with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" our answer must be that of the three Hebrew youths to Nebuchadnezzar; "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." We are not ashamed to say frankly, "We do not know how." We are not afraid to acknowledge a mystery in the highest ordinance of the Faith; and we desire to bear in mind that, if a mystery could be explained and made clear to the human understanding, it would cease to be a mystery. We object to you Rationalists, we object to you Romanists, that, the one by a figurative, the other by a gross and carnal interpretation, ye profess to explain the inexplicable. We think that even on subjects of Natural Science, which are not beyond the compass of human reason, professed explanations often serve only to obscure the truth. That body and mind reciprocally act upon one another; that the blood circulates in living animal bodies; that the nourishment received by such bodies is assimilated, and becomes part of the animal fabric, either bone, or flesh, or muscle; all these positions are certain, and may safely be assumed and acted upon; but as to how these things are, as to what precisely is the mystic link of sympathy between mind and matter, what is the origin of the movement called circulation, why a living body should have an assimilative power over nourishment,—of these points, even in the present very advanced state of Science, we must confess ourselves entirely

ignorant. Is it to be wondered at if in subjects of Revelation, which notoriously transcend the powers of the human mind, our understanding should sometimes be at fault? If in the researches of Natural Philosophy you can hardly move three steps without coming to a dead wall, how can we suppose that in Divine Philosophy mysteries, precluding all further research, will not meet us at every turn?

It will, however, frequently happen that if, in the acceptance of mysteries, we are humble, patient, and docile, our Heavenly Father will not indeed make them plain to our understandings, but will give us such glimpses of light upon them as will confirm us in our faith. And perhaps we may derive, under His blessing, some such confirmation of our faith from an illustration of the subject (it is nothing more) which we are now about to propose.

There is one other thing besides the Eucharistic Bread, which in Scripture is called, and called repeatedly, "the Body of Christ." The Church or Society of the faithful is so called. The Church "is his body," we are told, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." "The head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

And again (with an evident allusion, as the context shows, to the words of Adam respecting his newly-formed partner, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh"), "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." In this and other passages the marriage union is pointed at as signifying and representing "the spiritual marriage and unity which is betwixt Christ and His Church." And it is much to our purpose to observe, that this spiritual union is spoken of explicitly as a *mystery*: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Now, in the first place, we can easily see that when the Church is said to be the Body of Christ, just as when the Bread in the Eucharist is said to be His Body (or the communion of His Body), the words *have* a figurative meaning. No one will dispute this. The eyes, by which the body guides itself, are in the head. The thinking faculty, the willing and determining faculty, are supposed to reside in the head. The brain reflects, and then issues its volitions to the hand and the foot, through whom those volitions are carried out. Similarly Christ in Heaven illuminates His Church by the Holy Spirit, and shows her the way wherein she should walk. Christ issues His mandates to us through His Word, and through His Spirit in our consciences; and we are His instruments for carrying them out. All this is perfectly true; and all this serves to explain to us the reason why the Church is called the Body of Christ.

But is the expression *nothing more than a figure?* Is the union betwixt Christ and His Church, in virtue of which He is our Head, and we are His members, merely a metaphor, a poetical form of speech? God forbid that we should think so! for to think so would be to forfeit our greatest comfort. We are verily and indeed united to Christ,—after an heavenly and spiritual manner,—a manner no less real because it is spiritual and heavenly. Just as the immortal spirit is really united to the body, and just as the thread of connexion between the spirit and the body is that mysterious thing which we call life; so our spirits are really and truly united to Christ in Heaven, and the thread of connexion is that mysterious Agent, by whose operation He was conceived of the Virgin, and is conceived again in our hearts, the third Person in the Blessed Trinity, called, in the Nicene Creed, “the Lord, and Giver of life.” This Spirit the human soul of Our Lord possesses *without measure*; we, on the other hand, possess Him according to the measure of the gift of the Christ; but the connexion between us and Christ established by this medium, so far from

being a mere figure, is the most real union in the world. All other unions,—the union of the head with the members, of the branches with the vine, of the man with his wife,—are but shadows of this heavenly, spiritual, ineffable, and incomprehensible union, just as the furniture in Moses' tabernacle was but a poor dim copy of the things showed him in the mount.—Yet, on the other hand, what a monstrous and revolting absurdity would it be to represent this union of Our Blessed Lord with the members of His Church, as in any sense natural, earthly and carnal! Only imagine the absurdity of a man's pressing St. Paul's words,—“We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,” so literally as to say that he himself had an actual blood-relationship to our Lord, and was a member of His family according to the flesh. Or suppose that because it is written, “We are members of his body,” another should assert that he was literally the very foot, or the very hand of Christ, which was nailed to the Cross. These speculations would be justly regarded as the very ravings of fanaticism; and the man who should broach them would only be thought worthy of being lodged in an asylum for lunatics.

Now if the Church be called the Body of Christ, on the one hand, not by a mere figure, nor yet, on the other hand, in a literal, natural, and carnal sense, but in a heavenly mystery, why should not the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist be called His Body and Blood in a manner something similar? The Bread and Wine are unquestionably *figures* of His Body and Blood, the corn bruised in the mill aptly representing Him who was bruised<sup>1</sup> for our iniquities, the wine (or pressed

<sup>1</sup> In the Appendix I have attempted to give point to this symbolism of the Eucharistic Bread, by putting side by side two texts of Isaiah, “Bread corn is *bruised*” (ch. xxviii. 28), and “He was *bruised* for our iniquities” (liii. 5). It is now too late to alter this, the Appendix having been printed, and the type broken up. But I regret that the point sought to be gained by putting two passages of Scripture together should be rather a false one, the *Hebrew word translated “bruised” being not*

grape) aptly emblemizing that precious Blood, which was pressed out in the endurance of the curse for our sakes. But are the consecrated elements *nothing more than figures?* Not so. They are, in a heavenly mystery, which we presume not to understand, and therefore which we presume not to define, the Body and Blood of Christ, "insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ."

But it is surely fanatical, contrary not only to sobriety, but to reverence, to maintain that in a natural, animal, carnal way the elements are the Body and Blood of Christ. To take up such a position is to press the words of Scripture, against common sense, and against the analogy of other passages in which the same words are used, to a most revolting conclusion.

Our illustration has led us to speak of the real living oneness of the Church with Christ, even as the body is united to the head, and as the branches are united with the vine.

And we shall gain still further light upon our subject by remarking that of this union with Christ the Holy Communion is the great appointed means and instrumentality. This is well brought out in the first exhortation: "The benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament; (for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood; then we dwell in Christ,

*the same in both passages.* In xxviii. 28, the word is  $\text{דָּקַדְק}$ , a word specially used of the trituration of grain, as also of the breaking in pieces of idolatrous altars, etc. In liii. 5, the word is  $\text{שָׁבַב}$ , in which there seems to be much more of a moral element. The crushing denoted by it is usually a moral crushing, affliction, oppression, etc., and the crushed, or person subjected to the process, is the *contrite*. See Isa. lvii. 15 and Ps. xxxiv. 19.

and Christ in us ; *we are one with Christ, and Christ with us*").

Now it ought to be thoroughly understood and considered, in order to any right conception of the subject, that this union with Christ is the great blessing of the Ordinance to the faithful recipient. It is the blessing shadowed forth by the use of the outward visible sign, and actually realized by the soul of every faithful communicant. I say it is the blessing shadowed forth. For what is the use made of the Bread and Wine? They are taken and eaten. And what becomes of sustenance when received by a healthy frame? It is assimilated ; or, in other words, in due time it becomes part of the frame which receives it, and cannot be distinguished from other parts of the same kind. The food becomes bone, or flesh, or muscle, as the case may be. In an analogous way the heavenly or spiritual food, which is given in this Supper after an heavenly and spiritual manner, and which faith, wherever it exists, assimilates (for our faith is the organ of digestion,—that which alone makes the food available), is incorporated with our inner man ; and He, upon whose Body and Blood we have fed, becomes one with us, and we with Him. So that there is something more in this Sacrament, and something higher, than a mere spiritual *Presence* of Christ. That spiritual Presence is covenanted to all united worship, even when the Holy Supper is not celebrated ; for the charter of mere Common Prayer runs thus : “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” But you will at once see that the idea of Christ’s Presence with us, and the idea of Christ’s union with us, are totally distinct ; and that the latter idea, while it involves the former, goes far beyond it in blessedness. When we pay our respects at an earthly court, we are in the presence of the Sovereign ; but when, in the comparative privacy of our homes, we feel the full solace of all the charities and sympathies of domestic life, this is something more than the presence of our relations and



friends,—it is a union of hearts with them. And, similarly, it is a high privilege (as doubtless Angels account it equally with ourselves) merely to present ourselves before the King of kings, to do homage at His footstool in conjunction with our brethren. But it is a still higher and more blessed privilege (and one for which the Angels have no capacity, because Christ took not their nature upon Him, as He hath taken ours) to be united with the Lord, so as to become one Spirit with Him, so as to be “members” (after a true and real, and yet after an heavenly manner) “of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”

And here I must advert to an erroneous and unscriptural practice, which is fast creeping into some of our churches, though it has not a particle of sanction from the Liturgy. All erroneous practices will be found ultimately to spring from unsound views; and so I believe it is in this case. The practice I refer to is that of being present at the actual celebration of the Lord’s Supper without<sup>1</sup> communicating, and the accounting such presence as an acceptable work of devotion, though it be of an inferior grade. See how the view we have propounded fences off this mistake. The great characteristic blessing of the Ordinance is union with Christ; His Body and Blood are given in the Supper, not to be gazed upon by spectators, but to be partaken of by faithful communicants. Unless there is a participation, you defeat the end of the Ordinance. If the Church be asked to produce her warrant for the Celebration, she can produce none but this, “*Take, eat: this is my body.*” You will observe that “*Take, eat,*” are the very first words of the warrant. Then if a man comes without taking and eating, is it not a perverse thwarting of the Lord’s design and intention? If a sovereign should bid his councillors assemble for

<sup>1</sup> The practice in question having become very extensively prevalent since this warning against it was first written, it has been thought well to deal with it in a separate Chapter. The reader is referred to Chapter III. of the Appendix.

the purpose of giving him their advice in an important affair of state, and in consequence of this summons should expect from all of them some interchange of sentiment and discourse ; and if some should come to the council, but when there should refuse to open their lips, what would this be but to defeat the design of calling the council, and make the attendance of such persons at it a futile mockery ?

And if the Lord has instituted a Sacrament for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the participation of it, and we come to witness, but not to partake, is not this a plain perversion of what He meant by it? The Body and Blood of Christ are given in the Supper to be partaken of, and the consecration for any other purpose than that of partaking has no warrant of Our Lord's at all, and would therefore be vain and impious.

There is one most precious and consolatory thought (connected with what has been said) which, in the conclusion of this Chapter, we must develope. The union with Christ, which the Supper of the Lord both emblematises, and when duly received, conveys, is union with Christ *in His Death*. The Body and Blood are exhibited by the Bread and Wine in a state of separation from one another. Now the blood is in Scripture said to be the life ; and accordingly the separation of the blood from the body indicates that death has taken place. It is, then, with a dying Christ, and so with an atoning and propitiating Christ, that the Holy Supper, duly received, makes us one. Ah ! what an infinite comfort, when we consider the number and seriousness of our responsibilities, and the grievous failures of the best of us in meeting them ! Christ, we know, expiated all sins upon the Cross. "By his one oblation of himself once offered" (as our Prayer of Consecration has it) He "made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world."

Now in this holy Ordinance the great blessing of

union with Christ is offered to our faith,—of union with a dying, bleeding, agonizing Christ. We have the closest intercourse with Him, in whom, as St. Paul says, “all<sup>1</sup> died.” Christ died as representing sinful Humanity, lying under the ban and curse of sin; though personally standing entirely aloof from it, He identified Himself with our guilt, and took upon Him to answer all charges against us. If now we be one Spirit with Him,—if our union with Him be cemented inwardly by faith, outwardly by Ordinance,—we too have in Him really and truly died for sin, and by that death in Christ have endured sin’s penalty. The Law, the accusing conscience, the accusing spirit, have in that case no more charge against us,—we may go free. Oh, what a strength in dying to the *power* of sin may be gathered from this consideration, that in the dear Saviour, with whom we are so vitally and closely united in this blessed Sacrament, we have already died to its guilt! Oh! shall we not long for that union with Him,—union with His merits, with His Cross, with His Passion, with His Spirit, which faith indeed avails itself of, but which this Ordinance conveys and seals? For this union, be it remembered, is the secret not only of all peace and pardon, but of all strength; and the tighter the bonds of it are drawn, the greater will be our power over indwelling corruption, and the more close and happy will be our walk with God.

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to 2 Cor. v. 15, where ἄρα οἱ πάντες ἀπέθανον is most unfortunately translated, “then were all dead.” It should be, “then all died” (died penally in Christ, being represented in Him when He died).

## CHAPTER VIII

*OF THE SENTENCES OF ADMINISTRATION*

“He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.”

JOHN vi. 57

THE two sentences with which among ourselves the Communion in either kind is administered, exhibit a little miniature of the position of our Church, combining (as she everywhere does) two different aspects (or, perhaps, I should rather say, two different elements) of Truth. The former sentence is a prayer: “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee,—the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee,—preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life,” and is the same, with a very slight addition,<sup>1</sup> as that which was used in the mediæval Church, and is still used in the Church of Rome. The latter is an exhortation,—“Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving;” “Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful;”—and appeared for the first time in the second Prayer Book of King Edward VI., where it was appointed to be used alone, and to supersede altogether the first sentence, which had appeared alone in the first draught of the Prayer Book three years earlier.

It will be observed that the first sentence presents the Sacrament under the aspect of a means of Grace, as a rite, which (under certain assumed conditions) is of a salutary character: “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee,—the Blood of our

<sup>1</sup> The Form in the Sacramentary of Gregory is: “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto eternal life,”—omitting any mention of the body of the communicant. The introduction of the word “body” makes the form more complete, and conveys the important lesson which we have already dwelt upon, as taught us by that clause in the Prayer of Access, “That our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body.”

Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee,—preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.”

The second sentence, the composition, and substitution of which for the first, is no doubt due to the influence of the foreign Reformers, Bucer and Martyr, represents the Sacrament under the aspect of a Commemoration, and also recognizes in a marked way the doctrine of the Twenty-eighth Article, that “the Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.”

This last was the only sentence of Administration in the authorized Book of Common Prayer, until the reign of Queen Elizabeth. When her accession gave an opportunity for consolidating the work of the Reformation, which work had been thrown back by the persecutions and troubles of Mary's reign, a Royal Commission was appointed, the leading spirit of which seems to have been Guest, to review the second Prayer Book of King Edward VI., and make such additions and alterations in it as, without compromising Truth, might conciliate different parties in the Church. It was then thought that though the latter sentence contained much and valuable truth, it was by itself liable to the misinterpretation that the Lord's Supper is nothing more than a memorial; that this misinterpretation would be precluded by recalling the earlier and equally Scriptural sentence; and that therefore for the future they should both be used together, and coalesce into one formulary. And this arrangement has remained to the present day.

But in this connexion we may mention another historical circumstance connected with these sentences, though it did not issue in any modification or alteration of them. The application of the sentences to each individual communicant separately is ruled by the use in each of them of the singular number: “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for *thee*,—the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for

*thee*,—preserve *thy* body and soul unto everlasting life." This individual application of the blessing of the Ordinance was objected to by the Presbyterians at the Savoy Conference. Holding strongly the doctrine of particular Redemption, they thought that it could not truly be affirmed that for every communicant the Body of Christ was given and His Blood shed. These great privileges they thought could be predicated only of the elect; and they expressed a wish, therefore, that the sentences might be worded in the plural, and that the minister be not required to deliver the Sacramental elements "into every particular communicant's hand." Their recommendation of pluralizing the words, and using them only once for each body of communicants, is often adopted at present, and (as far as I know) without any Episcopal censure, sometimes from sheer necessity (the communicants being very numerous, and the ministers only one or two), in which case it is surely very uncharitable, and savours somewhat of a Phari-saical adherence to the letter of the law, to object to it; but sometimes also, I fear, because that mode of administration is really thought preferable to the mode which is actually prescribed. It may unsettle this preference in the minds of some, and lead them to look with suspicion on this deviation from the ordinary practice, to know that the alteration was first advocated by those who had a direct doctrinal end to subserve by it; and that these divines designed to insinuate, by pluralizing the sentence, the false and deadly error, which deprives the Gospel of half its lustre, and which (in truth) leaves it no Gospel at all for the mass of mankind,—that only for a select few of the human race was the Blood of Atonement shed, and that they only have an interest in the blessings of Redemption.

What has been said of the history of these sentences furnishes many interesting reflections, which have a practical bearing.

1. It has been often thrown out as a taunt against the Church of England, that the religion embodied in her formularies is a compromise between two conflicting

principles. This is an ill-natured way of representing a circumstance, which, looked at in the right light, does credit to our Zion. What is meant by the taunt is, that the Church of England embraces in her system different elements of Truth,—elements which find acceptance with minds of quite different classes. If to embrace these different elements in one system be a compromise, all that we can say in our defence (and surely it is enough) is, that the Holy Scriptures themselves are a compromise also. No candid person will deny that Scripture contains very strong statements on both sides of the Calvinistic and Arminian controversy, on both sides of the faith and works controversy, on both sides of the Baptismal Regeneration controversy; nor was there ever any errorist yet who did not appeal, in maintaining his error, to certain passages of the Bible, and to whom those passages do not seem to lend some support, if texts of an opposite character are put out of court. In the matter before us, the Scriptures say strong things on the mystery of the Holy Communion, and on its efficacy as a means of Grace. For let those persuade themselves, who can do so, that the words, “This is my body,” “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” mean nothing more than, “This is a figure of my Body, and of your participation in it.”—On the other hand, the Scriptures assert with clearness the non-mysterious side of the subject, and the commemorative character and purport of the Eucharist: “This do in remembrance of me;” “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord’s death till he come.” What our Service Book does, and that at the culminating point of the Rite, is to tread accurately in the footsteps of Holy Scripture,—to recognise both the mysterious efficacy, and also the commemorative aspect, of the Sacrament, as it were in one breath: “The Body, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul . . . take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee.”

Exactly similar is the treatment which other moot

points receive at the hands of the Prayer Book. For example, that of Absolution. On the one hand, the power of judicial Absolution, claimed by the Church of Rome, is effectually disclaimed. Exercised as it is in that corrupt Communion, where it enters as a regular practice into the normal life of a Christian to pour out all his secret sins periodically at the feet of a priest, and to rise up relieved (as he believes) of the burden of them, Absolution is nowhere seen in the Scripture, and it is accordingly nowhere seen in the Prayer Book. But is Ministerial Absolution therefore a figment, to be thrown overboard altogether? Have Christian Ministers no power or commandment to convey the tidings of God's Absolution, or to intercede for it on behalf of their people? No one who reads the Prayer Book (and we humbly think, no one who reads the Bible) will draw this inference from either one or the other. If there seem to be an inconsistency of tone in our Service Book,—an attempt to strike two notes at once, we really cannot help it; we fall back on Holy Scripture, where we find exactly the same feature, as our sufficient justification. And be it remembered that two or more notes struck together do not necessarily produce discord. They *may* produce harmony; while if only one note were struck, the effect would be monotony.

We acquiesce therefore thankfully in this composite character of our Liturgy; and think that it teaches a lesson most suitable for the present times. Our formularies were doubtless designed to be comprehensive, and to embrace the different aspects under which Truth presents itself to different minds. And our sympathies should travel in the same direction as our formularies. It would be a terrible calamity to the National Church (which we earnestly believe is one of the mightiest bulwarks that Christ's Kingdom has in the earth) if it were to represent only a single section of opinion, and if the advocates of that opinion should succeed in excluding from it those who were more forcibly impressed with another side of Truth.



While no compromise must be had with error, let our National Church represent, not only in its formularies, but in the opinions of its adherents, the many-sidedness of the Gospel of Christ. And that this end may be furthered by our course of action as individuals, let us joyfully recognize as brethren, and strive to gain good from, those whose opinions run in a different groove from our own, though both theirs and ours may very probably converge towards one central Truth. Of this we may be sure, that no one mind sees at once with entire impartiality the entire doctrinal system of the Bible. Of the religious views of every one it may be said, that they require supplementing by the religious views of some one else. Even men inspired unto infallibility, men whose tongues were precluded from error, because they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, by no means viewed Divine Truth under one light; they brought out, each according to the leaning of his own mind, a different feature of it. Judging from their respective Epistles, nothing can well be more distinct (not to say discrepant) than the aspects under which the Gospel presented itself to St. Paul and St. James, or again to St. Paul and St. John. A crude, hasty, and irreverent mind will cry out that St. Paul's view of Justification cannot stand with St. James's view; that any attempt to embrace the two in one system must result in a compromise, and prove (in short) a halting between two opinions. Allegations of a similar character have been often made against the Prayer Book: and it is not derogatory to the Prayer Book (rather the contrary) to admit that it is open to them. Two different parties have exercised an influence in its construction; two views of Truth—the mediæval view, and that taken by the Reformers—are represented in it. But if in the Holy Scriptures themselves, which are above the reach of criticism, we find the germs of both views, this feature of our Liturgy, so far from being an objection to it, is rather a strong recommendation. Let us beware how we mutilate this feature, if we value the comprehensiveness of the

National Church, and think that isolation from our brethren in Christ is a calamity to be deplored. It would be a short-lived triumph, indeed, if one party in the Church should succeed in striking out of the Service Book those passages of the Liturgy, which were not conceived in its own mould of thought. With the passages, we should probably lose many, whose sentiments they represented; and the Church, as has been the case already in the northern part of the island, would be palsied by the secession of some of her best and most gifted members.

2. Another valuable lesson of a more personal character is to be drawn from the singular form of the sentence of Administration, for which, as we have seen, our Church on one occasion made a stand upon principle. Most wisely and well did the Bishops on that occasion reply to the Presbyterians: "It is most requisite that the minister deliver the bread and wine into every particular communicant's hand, and repeat the words in the singular number; forso much as it is the propriety of Sacraments to make particular ob-signation to each believer." That is to say, the blessings purchased for all, without respect of persons, by the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ, are made over and applied to the individual through the channel of the Sacraments. The preached Word is for the whole congregation, assembled in Christ's name; it finds whom it may find; the seed is thrown broadcast by the sower, and lights, as it may chance, upon receptive or irreceptive soil. The gracious invitations of the Gospel are couched in terms altogether general: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;" "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But there is an instinctive feeling in the human mind, that in a general offer, or a general expression of benevolence, there is not the same amount of condescension, graciousness, encouragement, as in

one which particularizes our own case. If a king, as he rides along the streets of his metropolis, orders his almoner to fling gold pieces out of his purse among the people, to be caught and gathered up by any one who is fortunate enough to catch them, that is a proof of his bountifulness and consideration for his subjects generally. But it is a far greater condescension, and one which would give his subjects greater boldness in approaching him, if he should be seen advancing with a gold piece towards some poor man's hovel, and entering should say to him, "I have heard of your distress, and this gold piece is meant for your relief." Now God announces to us in His Word a general amnesty and offer of spiritual blessings; but in order further to help our infirm faith, He approaches us individually in His Sacraments, with these gifts in His hand. The Word says that Christ "tasted death for every man." The Sacrament comes, and proffers to each man individually the benefits of His death, saying, "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for *thee*,—the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for *thee*,—preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life."

Yes; it is not philanthropy merely, which God has shown in the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, but a *distinguishing love of individual souls*. The two sentiments are wholly distinct. Philanthropy is like the moonlight, exceedingly beautiful, when thrown in a silver flood over a landscape or group of buildings, but too cold to quicken life in Nature, or to bring out the blossom and perfume of flowers. But distinguishing personal love is like the sun's ray, genial and warm, and strikes deep into the heart of him on whom it fastens, and quickens that heart into lively emotions of gratitude and love. Now God in the Gospel deals with us as individual souls. He knew each one of us by name from all eternity, before we were shaped by His creative hand. He made His first approach to us in reconciling grace, when He caused the Gospel to be preached in the land, where we were first destined

to see the light. He made His next approach, when He brought us individually in the way of that Gospel, surrounded us with Christian influences, and appointed for us a Christian education. And can we still question whether He entertains towards ourselves special designs of love? Then all remaining doubt may be dissipated by His Sacraments. He laid His hand upon us when we were infants, and shed His Spirit upon us, and said to us, "Live." And now in the second and greater Sacrament He proffers to each of us the living Bread, to support the life already imparted. Oh, for the appetite to desire this nourishment! Oh, for the faith to feed upon it in the inner man! Oh, that all question of God's condescending graciousness to ourselves may vanish altogether with the proof of it which is thus given, when His minister approaches us with the consecrated elements, and prays that by His Son's Body and Blood our bodies and souls may be preserved unto everlasting life.

3. The Administration of the Communion (from the formulary of which we have been drawing these lessons) is the climax of the Ordinance, for which all that precedes has prepared the way, and to which the succeeding Prayer, and Hymn, and Blessing form an appropriate conclusion. Pursuing our former comparison of the Communion Office to a great Church or Cathedral, we have now advanced up to the very Table of the Lord, and have knelt there, to communicate with Him, and now have only to descend again into that part of the building which lies behind the Altar, and so pass out. But in what an act have we been engaged! an act whose influence and effects should surely appear in us afterwards. If we have been faithful and believing communicants, the act has been instrumental in uniting us to Christ, and making us one Spirit with the Lord. And the exceeding closeness of that union who shall describe? It is symbolized to us in this Sacrament by the union of food with the bodily frame. Now the food which we receive, in process of time becomes part (and an indis-

tinguishable part) of ourselves; it becomes muscle, or bone, or flesh; is assimilated, in short, to the substance of the body. This, and nothing less than this, is the union which the Lord appoints to be symbolical of His oneness with His true Church. And observe another doctrine conveyed to us by the Administration. The Bread and Wine, the symbols and vehicles of the Body and Blood, are given, taken, and received separately. By the separateness of the elements is indicated the death of Christ; for the separation of the body from the blood, which is the life thereof, is what constitutes death. By partaking therefore separately of the Sacraments of the Body and the Blood, we are united to Christ *in His death*. We become one with Him who died upon the Cross. His death is our death, and we in Him have died unto sin. We have paid the penalty of our transgression of God's Law, so that Divine Justice has no more any claim upon us. And in doing so we have died to the power of the sinful principle, which has relaxed its grasp upon us, and set us free to serve God in the newness of the spirit, and to present to Him, our wills being liberated from their thralldom, the reasonable sacrifice of ourselves, our souls, and bodies. Such is an outline of the train of thought, by which we pass from the Administration to the first Post-Communion Prayer, which, with the "Gloria in Excelsis," must form the subject of another Chapter.

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## CHAPTER IX

### *OF THE POST-COMMUNION*

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come. . . . And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives."—JOHN xvii. 1; MATT. xxvi. 30

**I**N order to derive its full profit from the Holy Communion, care must be taken not only to prepare our-

selves beforehand for its reception, but to guide the mind and heart into a right groove of sentiment subsequently. Of all exercises of Devotion generally, and of this in particular, it is true that, after having strung up our wills to them previously, we are prone afterwards to collapse. This is due partly to natural infirmity, which cannot bear too long a tension of the mind upon high subjects, calculated to call out all its powers. But then this natural infirmity, though in itself innocent, lays us open to real spiritual dangers, indolence, softness, and a certain weariness (sometimes amounting almost to disgust) of divine things. Mere fatigue is no sin; but our enemies are always at hand to take their occasion from fatigue, or from whatever else seems to open an avenue to the will. And hence it comes to pass that, as the experience of all good Christians will testify, at no time does Satan seem more on the alert,—at no time do our inbred corruptions give us more trouble, than after we have devoted some good period of time to religious exercises. To engage in prayer (and to communicate devoutly, is to engage in prayer of the highest kind), is to throw down the glove to the Devil; and those who do so rarely fail to find that he picks it up again.

It follows, then, that considerable attention should be paid to the manner in which we withdraw from the Presence of Our Lord in the Holy Communion. A musician not only gets his instrument into tune, and makes trial of it with certain preluding touches, before he begins to play; but also brings the strain to a regular and gradual close, not breaking it off rudely and abruptly, but so managing the strings or notes, that the cadence shall gently die away in the ear of the listeners. And he who would gather great profit from the blessed Sacrament must not only try his heart by self-examination and preparatory prayer beforehand, but also, when his necessary intercourse with the world again begins, must endeavour to retain upon his mind the impressions he has received, and allow them still to vibrate softly in his spirit.

Now I believe that as the introductory part of the Communion Office is designed to get the mind into a suitable frame for the Ordinance, so the latter part is designed to indicate the spirit which we should cultivate, if we wish duly to follow up our Communion, and still to inhale its atmosphere. I do not regard either part of the Service as having fulfilled its whole design to the communicant, when it has been read through and responded to in church. The Lord's Prayer is not merely destined for use as a piece of devotion; it is throughout a teaching Prayer, showing us upon what blessings our hearts should be most fondly set, for what blessings we must petition modestly and with great reserve, in what spirit towards our fellow-men we must approach God, and a thousand other precious lessons, which no tongue or pen can exhaust. And our Church Services are (of course in a lesser degree, but still in their measure) constructed upon the same principle; they not only puts words in our mouth when we pray publicly, but teach us also privately, if we study them, both how we should pray, and also how we should desist from Prayer. It is on this view of their significance, that we shall in this Chapter make some remarks on the Prayers and Hymn which follow the Administration, and which go by the name of the Post-Communion.

Our Blessed Lord, after instituting the holy Supper, and apparently before He left the "large upper room furnished," which was the scene of the Institution, offered up the great high-priestly Prayer, which is recorded in St. John xvii. Then, before quitting the chamber (it is thus that the events of that solemn evening best arrange themselves) He sang with His disciples a Hymn,—in all probability the latter part of the great Hallel (or Hymn of praise) usually sung at the Jewish Passover, and consisting of six Psalms, the one hundred and thirteenth to the one hundred and eighteenth inclusive. That there should be, then, certain public Devotions after the Communion seems to be a practice traced upon the primitive Institution,

and quite accordant with our Lord's example. But more than this. There are one or two thoughts, as we shall see, in Our Lord's Post-Communion Prayer, which find an echo, more or less distinct, in the Post-Communion of our own Service.

1. Our Lord's Prayer in the chapter referred to is called the great high-priestly Prayer. It consists of an intercession for His disciples to the end of time. But this intercession, though a most important feature of the prayer, does not seem to be the centre or nucleus of it. Christ's intercession is grounded on what He has done for His Church. Accordingly, in the heart of this Prayer He mentions His consecration of Himself (more correctly, I should say, He consecrates Himself) for the work of Atonement, which on the following day He was about to take in hand. "For their sakes," says He, "I sanctify" (consecrate, set apart) "myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Here is the great High Priest devoting Himself to offer on the morrow the sin-offering in His own Person; taking up into His mouth the language which had been put there long ago by prophetic anticipation: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." This is His oblation of Himself, His soul and body, to be a "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world."

And now what do we find to be the key-note of our first Post-Communion Prayer! Is it not the presentation of the Christian's reasonable service,—the oblation of himself, "*his* soul and body," to be "a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God?" This oblation is indeed in no sense (like that of Christ) propitiatory. It is made, and is acceptable, only on the ground of Christ's finished work, in the merits and virtues of which the faithful communicant is a sharer. We have just been united—inwardly by faith, outwardly by the Ordinance—with a bleeding and a dying Christ, a Christ wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. Being truly united to that meritorious



Death, we too in Him have died, have died to sin in its condemning guilt, and in its domineering power. And the old man in us having died, we offer the new man or better self unto God, feeling that He now accepts us, in virtue of our union with the Son of His love; and not accepts us only, but constitutes us a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ. Being members of this royal priesthood, we must have somewhat to offer. The somewhat is ourselves. And accordingly we offer ourselves, re-echoing, while we do so, the precept of the holy Apostle: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," and re-echoing also, in our measure, and according to the vast difference of our position in God's Kingdom, Our Lord's consecration of Himself after the first institution of the Communion; "For their sakes I sanctify myself."

Let us see to it, then, that we leave the Holy Table in a spirit of self-sacrifice; and let us strive that after every Communion this spirit may more and more take possession of our hearts, and struggle into an outward expression in our lives. Sacrifice is the very soul of true religion. The Sacrifice of Christ is the very centre of Christianity; and the sacrifice of the Christian is the legitimate consequence of the Sacrifice of Christ,—the development in each individual member of the Divine Life which is in the Head. As our Blessed Lord, after instituting the Holy Supper, consecrated Himself to do God's will on the Cross, and to make a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for our sins; so let us also, after partaking of the rite, by which the benefits of His Offering are conveyed to us, yield ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Let the thought follow us into our daily life, that we have put ourselves and all that we have at God's disposal, our hands to do His business, our feet to walk on His errands, our eyes

to study His works, our ears to listen to His Word, our mind to apprehend His glory, our heart to love His perfections.

2. There is another leading topic of Our Lord's high-priestly Prayer, which, curiously enough, finds its echo also in our Post-Communion. It is a prayer, not only of dedication for Himself, but also for the unity of His followers. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name" (literally, *in* Thine own Name—in the acknowledgment of it) "those whom thou hast given me, that *they may be one*, as we are." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they *all may be one*; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

Now listen to the distant echo of these petitions for unity in the *second* noble Prayer of our Post-Communion. After thanking God "for that" He doth "vouchsafe to feed us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of" His "Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; and" doth "assure us thereby of" His "favour and goodness towards us; and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of" His "Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people," we thus proceed: "And we most humbly beseech thee so to assist us with thy grace, that we *may continue in that holy fellowship*." In the one Bread broken among many communicants, we have just seen the symbol of Christian unity. If we have been faithful partakers of that one Bread, we have been drawn closer in heart and sympathy to our brethren, by the very fact that we have been drawn closer to the Lord. It is impossible to adhere closely to the Head, without a close adherence to the other members. So now we pray most appropriately that "*we may continue in that holy fellowship*," in which the Ordinance, duly received, has placed us. Now by what means (for this is the practical question for those who have communicated) is this continuance to be secured? Our Lord

Himself points out the means, when He prays, "Keep in<sup>1</sup> thine own name those whom thou hast given me, *that they may be one*;" His beloved disciple points it out, when he writes, "If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have *fellowship* one with another." To be kept in God's Name is to be kept in the constant practical acknowledgment of His holiness on one hand, and His love on the other. To walk in the light, is only another form of stating the same thing. For light is compounded of two kinds of rays, bright and sombre: and for this reason God is in the Scriptures called Light, because in His character there are the more awful, and also the more lovely and attractive perfections. To walk in the light, then, as He is in the light, is to hold both classes of these perfections before the mind's eye, and to be practically influenced by both,—in other words, it is to walk in "the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." A spirit of holy awe, which makes us dread above all things to incur the Divine displeasure, a spirit of fervent love, relieving that awe, and changing it into an affectionate reverence—such a love as takes away from obedience the irksomeness of restraint, and makes God's service perfect freedom,—this is the double spirit which must habitually influence us, if we would walk in the light, and be kept in God's Name. And the natural and necessary result of being under the influence of this spirit, will be a holy fellowship with our brethren in Christ, whose hearts by the same supernatural attraction are being drawn to the same centre as our own. For the unity of the true Church of Christ does not stand in any outward forms of worship, but in a living union and communion with the Church's Head. There may be uniformity where there is none of this unity, persons of the most opposite religious sentiments and principles being externally held together by their nominal adherence to the same religious community. And, on the other hand, this unity may exist, where there

<sup>1</sup> Τήρησον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου. St. John xvii. 11.

is, and can be, no uniformity, many true servants of God and followers of Christ being doubtless found in all the different sections of the Christian world. It is such a spiritual nearness to Christ as secures a spiritual nearness to our brethren, which we sue for in the second Post-Communion Prayer, and which is the great grace to be cultivated in pursuance of the Ordinance, and as the legitimate expansion of it in our lives. Ourselves we are to sacrifice ; while we walk in holy fellowship with others. And might not this sentiment be fostered by distinctly regarding our fellow-Christians as members of the Lord's Body, by representing them to ourselves as such, when we do acts of considerateness and kindness to them ? Let us think, when we are doing service to any of them,—“ This is service done to the Lord ; for so truly and entirely is He one with His Church, that He lives in them, and is wounded or comforted through their sides.” Of a saint of old it is recorded that with the greatest alacrity she ministered to the sick and suffering, from the reflection that their outward circumstances were only a disguise, that their poverty and maladies were a sort of Sacrament of Christ, whose Divine Presence was hidden underneath them.

3. We have spoken of holding the awful and attractive perfections of God before the eyes of our minds, and of thus walking in the light, and having fellowship one with another. The same idea repeats itself with a very slight modification in the Hymn “Gloria in Excelsis,” with which the people's share of the Office concludes. It is a very ancient Hymn, frequently mentioned by Chrysostom as forming part of the Communion Service, and used apparently by the primitive Christians as a Hymn for morning devotions. The blossom out of which this beautiful flower unfolds itself is the Song of the Angels at the Nativity, of which the whole Hymn is an expansion. This song was first sung at Bethlehem,—a village whose name means the house of bread—a name not without deep significance ; for it was here that the living Bread was first found,

which came down from heaven;—in other words, it was here that Our Lord was born. His Body He gives in this Sacrament to be the food of our souls; and therefore at the celebration of this Sacrament, in which His Body is represented and conveyed, we appropriately sing the Song of the Nativity: “Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men,” and enlarge upon it with appropriate sentiments of devotion. The whole piece falls into three paragraphs,—a division pointing to the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, each of whom is confessed in the final clause. The first paragraph is a burst of exulting praise, in which the Church upon earth once again presumes to re-echo the strains, which float downwards to earth from angelic harps. But in the second paragraph she recognizes clearly that, though even at present privileged to join with the choir of Heaven, she is still militant—“tossed upon the waves of this troublesome world.” For this paragraph consists of fervent and most humble prayers to the one Mediator to have mercy upon us, to look upon us with pity from the Mediatorial Throne, and to receive our prayer.

This interlacing of the acknowledgment of sin and weakness with joyous and exulting praise, is quite in keeping with what we observed upon in the former part of the Service; the profound humility of the Prayer of Access succeeding immediately to the “Holy, Holy, Holy,” of the Seraphim. While privileged to pass through the veil into the immediate Presence Chamber of the Divine Majesty, and to worship God in the very strains which Angels themselves employ, we sinners must never forget that we are sinners, sore beset by the corruption of our nature and sinful infirmity, and that it is only through the Mediator that we can draw nigh to the Heavenly Throne. And more especially are these reflections suitable after the Communion, when we are just about to close, and finally present to God, our high sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; and the most hasty glance behind us

upon the regulation of our minds and hearts during the performance of the Service must serve to show many shortcomings, many failures in fervour and zeal, if not in attention. So this second paragraph is a virtual placing of our poor services in the hands of the Mediator, and an implicit prayer to Him to take away the sin that is in them, and then to offer them for us, and procure their acceptance by His Mediation. There is something very touching in that part of the appeal, "Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us." Christ is now exalted far above the reach of sorrow and temptation; He has entered into His Glory; and has exchanged the revilings of men, which reached His ear when on the Cross, for the adoration of the Seraphim. Yet we do not, we cannot, believe that His altered circumstances have changed His heart of love towards us. Rather the contrary. He has carried with Him into Heaven the dint made by His Passion upon His Mind as well as upon His Body; and the remembrance of what He underwent for us on earth unlocks towards us the sluice of His compassion, as He sits above. We may be well assured that He, who once left the royalties of Heaven out of love to us, will not, now that He has had experience of our miseries on earth, be unmindful of us amidst those royalties. And so, very much in the strain of the penitent robber, (would that we could imitate his faith as closely as we express his sentiments!) we pray Him to remember us, now that He is come into His kingdom:—"Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us."

The third paragraph again rises into the language of praise, ascribing glory to the Blessed Trinity, and specially to Him who, under the Mediatorial Kingdom, is the central figure of the Sacred Three, and the Representative of God to the creatures: "Thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father."

And now summarily to gather up the teaching of our Communion Service respecting the way in which the Ordinance should be followed up. First, the idea of self-sacrifice should pervade our after life. Secondly, we should strive after a closer walk with God, and a more loving and unselfish fellowship with our brethren in Christ. And, finally, we should live much in the element of praise and adoration, endeavouring to associate ourselves with the company of Heaven in their exercises of devotion, while at the same time we mix with these joyful and exulting strains, constant and fervent ejaculations to Our Lord, in acknowledgment of our guilt and infirmity, and appeal from hour to hour of each day, with strong assurance of faith, to His sympathy and power. Endeavour during the week succeeding your Communion, to throw your devotional sentiments into this mould ; and thus ascertain by experience the significance and appropriateness of the Post-Communion Service, as a sequel to the Administration of the Holy Supper.

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## CHAPTER X

### *OF THE BENEDICTION*

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”—JOHN xiv. 27

WHAT is a benediction ? It is of the nature of an intercessory prayer. The Church is so bound up together in God’s eyes,—nay, men in general are so bound up together by common interests and a common hope,—that Prayers are commanded to be offered by all men for all, in acknowledgment and in pursuance of this relation. And the prayers which we offer for others, as distinct from those in which we seek our own private good, are termed intercessory. A Benediction,

however, though of the nature of an Intercessory Prayer, is something more specific. In the limited and strict sense of the word, it is *an intercessory prayer, offered by one who is invested with some authority over those for whom he prays*. The authority may be natural, civil, or ecclesiastical. Of benedictions bestowed on the ground of natural authority over the persons receiving them, we have instances in the history of the Patriarchs. We read of Isaac blessing Jacob and Esau, of Jacob blessing Ephraim and Manasseh. Again; we find David and Solomon blessing their people, the one at the introduction of the ark into the new Tabernacle, which had been provided for it, the other at the dedication of the Temple. Here the authority must have been civil or political; for the kings of Israel did not belong to the tribe in which was the Priesthood. But, finally, the authority to bless may be ecclesiastical. One chief function of the sacred tribe of Levi under the Mosaic Ritual was to bless in the name of the Lord; and for the performance of this function by the Priests a special formulary was prescribed by Jehovah Himself. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

Conformably to the genius of Christianity, which nowhere (save in the Lord's Prayer) prescribes any formulary, and which is generally averse to such prescription, as teaching us to serve God, not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit, no words of benediction are enjoined in the New Testament upon the Christian minister;—the form is left free to the discretion of the Church, guided (as she was to be) by the Spirit of Christ ever present in her. But who can doubt that the authority to bless in the name of the Lord still remains in the ministry of the Church, now that that ministry, like the Church itself, has



been brought out into the clearer light of the New Dispensation? Nay; who can doubt not only that the authority remains, but that the exercise of it is attended with results of a much higher order, results which reach much deeper into the inner and true life of the soul, than it was under the former state of things? As much as the ministration of righteousness exceeds in glory the ministration of condemnation, in such proportion must the benedictions of the Christian be more blessed and more effectual than those of the Jewish minister. Only let it not be forgotten that neither has the smallest absolute and independent authority; neither is more than a minister. The office of Ministry, whether under the old or new Dispensation, is only a channel and vehicle, by no means a source, of Grace. It is not really the minister in either case who blesses, but Christ who thus uses his ministry. The source and fountain of all benediction is our Lord's Intercession for us in Heaven. He intercedes for us, as being "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," connected with us by a natural tie; as being King of kings, of whose authority earthly dominion is but a shadow; and finally as being the great High Priest, who has entered into the heavenly Sanctuary with His own Blood. When His ministers bless His people in His Name, it is an echo of His continual and effective Benediction, floating down to the earth, and intercepted in the Ordinances of the Church.

We now proceed to consider the particular form which our Church has given to her most solemn Benediction,—that which occurs at the end of the Communion Office. It runs thus: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always. *Amen.*"

The former clause, which speaks of the peace of God,

appeared for the first time in the first Reformed Book of Common Prayer; nor, we are persuaded, could any form of words be devised more appropriate and more Scriptural.

Here again the words are traced upon the history which has come down to us of the original Institution. For it was after the Last Supper (see St. John xiii. 2) that the words, which stand at the head of this Chapter, were spoken, when Our Lord, on the eve of parting with them, was addressing to His disciples those most precious farewell counsels, contained in the fourteenth and two following chapters of St. John. Adieu is the solemn and tender key-note of those chapters throughout; and in the verse before us the key-note is sounded alone. "Peace be with you," or "Go in peace," was the common form of valediction current in Jewish society, just as "God be with you," (now corrupted into "Good-bye") is in our own. Perhaps it is from the feeling that there is something hollow and purely conventional in "Good-bye,"—that, like a coin whose image and superscription have worn away by constant friction, it now no longer has any religious significance,—perhaps it is for this reason that in our more solemn partings from those in whom we are specially interested, we rather say, "God bless you." A thought not dissimilar to this (so far as we may presume to trace His divine thoughts) gave rise to the solemn words before us. In giving His parting salute to His disciples, Our Lord, who has lived by the wayside of human life throughout His career, who has been mixed up with its cares, and interests, and sorrows, and joys, yea, who has constantly moved in the midst of its conventionalities and sins, though He Himself was the true and the pure One, will not deviate from the forms of courtesy commonly in use in His age and among His people. "Peace I leave with you," says He, as the manner was, when friends were parting. Yet He will rescue this good and godly phrase from the insignificance and trite commonplace into which it had sunk, and mint it afresh, and issue it with a new device, and in all the shining radiance of a Gospel Benediction.

from the treasury of God. In that disturbed and unsettled state of the nation of Israel, which covers so very large a space of their early history as a people, it is no wonder if peace were thought the sum and substance of all blessings,—if to wish a man peace was virtually to wish him prosperity in every form,—to wish that he might sit under his vine and under his fig-tree to a good old age, while his children were as olive branches round about his table. But our Blessed Redeemer gives the valediction quite another turn, takes it out of the circle of worldly prosperity, and makes it reach to the inner man of the heart. “*My peace,*” says He, “I give unto you;” “the peace with God which is purchased for you with My Blood, the seat of which is the spirit within, and which no outward reverses can destroy, because they cannot reach it. Moreover, there is another great difference between this valediction, as it is in the world’s mouth, and as it is in Mine. The world can at the utmost only *wish* you peace. It is incompetent to do more. A friend, torn for he knows not how long from those in whom he is deeply interested, is no doubt fervent enough in *desiring* for them every blessing. Ah! if he could only *communicate* to those whom he is leaving behind all the good he *wishes*, how happy would their lot be! But good wishes are all he has to give. Not so with Me and you, whom I have called My friends. My valediction is not so much votive as effective; it is not so much a wish as a bestowal. “My peace I *give* unto you.” With us willing and doing are separate things. The will may exist where the power is absent. But it is not so with God. It is not so with the Lord Jesus, who is God. Their will instantaneously takes effect, even in the far corners of Creation, as it is said, “He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast;” “Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in the earth, and in the sea, and in all deep places.” Accordingly with them, willing and doing is identical; and to wish peace, on the part of God or of Christ, is to give peace. “My peace I *give* unto you.”

What a legacy ! Was ever any such bequeathed before ? “ I take of the peace, which exists in the Sacred Heart of My humanity,—the peace which flows from a firm and tranquil confidence in the Father—and with the arm of My Omnipotence, I reach it down into your hearts, and make you partakers of it.”

Now the echoes of this valedictory word of Christ (spoken, you observe, “after supper was ended”) we hear in the sentence which concludes our Communion Office : “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God.”

But here another passage of Scripture flows into the current of our argument, and lends its aid to show the great appropriateness of these words to the occasion on which they are used.

The former part of the Blessing is only an adaptation of the Divine promise, made through St. Paul to persons under anxiety, on their fulfilment of a certain condition. The Apostle’s words are these : “Be careful for nothing ; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.”

The peace of God is covenanted by promise to those who refer their wants and wishes to God in prayer, and mix thanksgiving with the supplication. Now the Holy Communion is the Church’s great act of Prayer and Thanksgiving ; indeed her *only* public act originally. As things were in quite the primitive days, this was the only distinctively Christian Service. Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Prayer at the various hours, did not come into a separate existence until long afterwards. Indeed, the application of the word Liturgy, or Public Service, to all the Offices of the Church is comparatively modern ; by an ancient Liturgy is meant merely and exclusively an Office for the Communion. The Eucharist then being really the Church’s highest act of Prayer, the service for it is most suitably ended

by a reference to that peace, which God by His Apostle has promised to faithful prayer.

Only observe that in order to entitle each petitioner, under the terms of the promise, to this peace, the prayer must be real prayer, a true outpouring of the heart with all its felt necessities before God. Let us labour to make our prayers such; and that not only in our private chambers, but at the time of our Communion. This particular Service offers more opportunities of doing so than any other. In Morning and Evening Prayer there is usually no pause, a circumstance which is perhaps to be regretted; for as we are told that Our Lord is specially present among assembled worshippers, devout persons must feel a desire to bring *at that particular time* to the Throne of Grace all the burdens and cares of which they are privately conscious. But except just at the beginning and end of Morning and Evening Prayer, no time for doing this can be secured. In the Communion it is otherwise. There the time which must necessarily elapse while others are communicating, offers a good opportunity of referring secretly to God every want and wish of the heart; or I should rather say, every want and wish which can bear to meet His eye. And every innocent want and wish, even on temporal matters, *may* freely meet His eye, and ought to be made to do so in compliance with the terms of the precept,—“*In every thing* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

Only let it be understood that requests for earthly blessings must be simply presented to God, and not offered unconditionally and irrespectively of our own highest good, and His will and plan for us. The promise, be it observed, is not that the request shall be granted in the form in which it is offered; but that an inward peace shall, after this reference of the matter to God, still all the uneasy cravings of the heart, and keep the mind fresh and uncantered in the midst of trouble. And this will be, if our minds are kept in the knowledge, and our hearts in the love of God; that is,

if we remain persuaded by faith of His all-sufficiency and willingness to supply our needs, and maintain towards Him that affectionate confidence, which is its own assurance against disappointment. If we look for this from our petitions, and only for this, we may ask what we will, and make known any requests to our Heavenly Father. And thus to ask what we will, to make specific petitions having reference to our own case, to lay down that burden at the Throne, under which we ourselves secretly groan, will throw into the Service of the Holy Communion a reality and a life which there can hardly be in any Service, where all through from beginning to end we are required to bend our desires into a rigid framework, prepared beforehand. Excellent as our written forms of Prayer are, and necessary as we conceive them to be for the devout and intelligent conduct of Public Worship, it is no doubt very necessary to watch against formality in the constant use of them, and to ask ourselves now and then with very great seriousness, not only, "How far have I been attentive during this Service?" but the much deeper question, "How far has my heart spoken to God in these Prayers?"

For if a man's prayer (in this or any other Ordinance) be not the utterance of the heart,—if there be no felt want, nor any representation of it to God, but only (at best) the fulfilment of an acknowledged duty, and the satisfaction of conscience thereby, how can such a prayer win the covenanted peace, the peace which Christ imparts, the peace of God which passeth understanding?—Observe the result which our Lord Himself points out, as that which must occur in such a case. "Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace" (the better reading is, *a* son of peace) "be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again." This passage lays down a great law of the kingdom of heaven, by which all benedictions issued in that kingdom are ruled. The blessing really goes forth in the name, and by the authority of Christ, from the

lips of the commissioned messenger. Yet it lights not except on sons of peace,—those whom God's secret Grace has brought into a state of discipline and preparation for it. The dawn opened its rosy eyelids morning by morning on many a statue besides Memnon's ; but none but Memnon's had the chords of music wrought within ; and therefore none but Memnon's vibrated melodiously at the touch of the dawn. Or, to use a better and a sacred illustration, the dove which Noah put forth from the ark, flew over the waste of waters, but, finding no rest for the sole of her foot, returned again to him into the ark. And when again he sent her forth, again she returned, and with an olive branch in her mouth, a token that now there was at least one spray visible, on which the fowls of the air might alight. The peace of God resembles that dove. It issues forth in Divine Ordinances, and in this Ordinance more especially, through the ministry of man. But it by no means rests on every partaker of the Ordinance. It finds out sons of peace, and nestles in their bosoms. From the rest, from those who have not the elements of peace within,—who present themselves in the congregation of the righteous without faith, or fervent desire, or holy longing,—it turns away. The “holy dove, the messenger of rest,” cannot harbour where sin, or hypocrisy, or formality, or worldliness, prevail and reign.

What a lesson is there in this thought of the necessity of a certain congeniality to this Ordinance, if we desire to profit by it. Most true it is that all God's Ordinances, in virtue of their being appointed by Him, have their blessings annexed to them, and going forth from them. They are none of them empty channels, without virtue and efficacy ; they are all means of Grace. But it by no means follows hence that the Grace reaches indiscriminately all who attend upon them. As it is with the Word, so it is with all other means of Grace. The seed of the Word lights on some beaten road, where it finds no lodgment at all ; on some thorny soil, where it is strangled ; on some shallow soil,

where it withers away. On the good ground only does it spring up, and bring forth fruit an hundredfold. Then, in the case of this holy Sacrament do we do our part to train the heart beforehand to the required correspondence? Do we come to the Holy Table with at least a strong appetite for spiritual blessings? Have we that hunger and thirst after righteousness, to which the promise of satisfaction is made? Particularly, have we a longing to go forward in the ways of God, and to attain that high degree of spirituality and holiness, to which God has indisputably called all who hear the Gospel, and which some choice souls, under disadvantages, and trials, and temptations, certainly not less discouraging than our own, have actually reached? Then doubtless, in proportion to the sincerity and fervour of this desire, we shall find this holy Sacrament to be a real power in the kingdom of God, and shall carry away from it that peace, which lies at the root of all Christian energy, and which can maintain itself in the face of the greatest outward discomforts and discomposures. What a crown is this peace to the various emotions, which foregoing parts of the Service have called out!



# APPENDIX

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## CHAPTER I

### *TRANSUBSTANTIATION AND KINDRED ERRORS*

- “ The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth.”
- “ The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.
- “ For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.
- “ When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

JOHN iv. 49, 50; MATT. viii. 8-10.

**T**HE healing of the nobleman's son, recorded by St. John, reminds us of the cure of the centurion's servant, under circumstances in some respects similar. Both nobleman and centurion were of Capernaum. The son in one case, the servant in the other, was healed by an act of Our Lord's will, operating upon them while they were at a distance from Him. But beyond these two points, the contrast of the two cases (a contrast which Augustine and others have drawn out, in detail) is more remarkable than their resemblance.

One man was a centurion,—a position which may be

represented with tolerable accuracy to our minds by calling him a non-commissioned officer of the Roman army. The other was a nobleman, or, as perhaps the word might be rendered, a person engaged in the royal household, a courtier. It is most interesting to observe, in reference to this difference of position, how Our Lord volunteered a visit to the house of the little man ("Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him"); but made no such offer to come under the roof of the great man, nor to move from the place where He then was. Elisha does not stir when an honourable captain comes "with his horses and with his chariot," and stands at the door of his house; and Christ does not stir when a member of the royal household implores Him to "come down and heal his son." The messengers of God accept no man's person. The nobleman's interest was in a son, and flowed from natural affection. The centurion's interest was in a servant or slave, and argues him, in the then estimate usually formed of slaves, to have been a man of kindly feeling and general sympathy. It never seems to have crossed the nobleman's mind that he was unworthy of a visit from Our Lord. The centurion, on the other hand, is quite overwhelmed by the prospect of such an honour: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." Finally, (and this is the point to which attention is to be drawn in connexion with the subject of this Chapter), *the nobleman seems never to conceive the possibility of Christ's healing at a distance.* If the Lord is to restore his son, He must be under the same roof, and in the same room with the patient: "Sir, *come down* ere my child die." The centurion, on the other hand, expressly avows his conviction that Christ's Presence is not needed to perform the cure which he solicited. A word, a beck, a nod, a mere signification of the will from a Person possessed of such extraordinary powers, will abundantly suffice: "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." And the way in which from the circle of his own experience he reasons him-

self into this faith is very remarkable. He was familiar with the discipline of a camp or an army, in which the various arrangements and movements are ordered at head-quarters, and executed by subordinates. When this is done on a large scale, there is certainly something very imposing in the authority which the will of a single individual exerts. The centurion would think of the Roman emperor, the commander-in-chief of all the armies of the state, whether in the most distant provinces, or in the neighbourhood of the seat of empire. Let us imagine Tiberius, the then emperor, as he indulged his passion for retirement and vicious pleasures in the secluded island of Capreae, taking a whim that some legion should be removed from one extremity of the empire to another. He need not stir to effect such an arrangement. He speaks a word to his secretary, directing him to make out the order, and send it forthwith to Rome. From Rome it flies by a succession of couriers along those great roads, which, like arteries, traversed the empire in all directions, and are even now the best monuments of Roman civilization, until it reaches its destination. Immediately all is movement and hurry in the camp, striking of tents, and bringing out of waggons, and packing of movables, and in the morning, at the call of the trumpet, the legion is on its way to the far East, or far West, leaving behind it the mound which formed its rampart, and the trench, to become in future generations a study for the antiquary. Five or six thousand men are swept from one end of the earth to the other by the will of a despot a thousand miles away. "If I now," reasoned the centurion,—“quite a subordinate link in the great chain of military authority,—if even I, by an order to my private soldiers, or my servant, can alter the state of things in the troop under my command without my own personal intervention, cannot this extraordinary Man, who has evidently the powers of nature at His command (for He has stilled the tempest, He has cleansed the leper, He hast cast out

devils, He has raised the dead), raise up my servant from his bed of languishing, without moving from the spot where He at present is? Therefore, 'Lord, trouble not thyself; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.'"

This man's faith, then, was in fact an enlarged conception of the power of Christ,—such a conception as the nobleman wanted, and as Our Lord sought to create in him. In the other great instance of faith commended by Our Lord, the faith stands in an enlarged conception of the *love* of Christ. The Syro-phœnician too reasons herself into this faith from the facts of her experience. She had observed that in the great system of God's universe provision is made for the wants of the inferior creatures. Bread is for men, not dogs; but still dogs get some portions of it, the fragments which the master wipes his hands with, and flings down on the floor. If a fragment of good bread is thrown to a dog, may not she, although an outcast of the Gentiles, have a fragment of mercy bestowed upon her? Despite all the apparent ungraciousness of His answers, she believes that the fragment will be thrown to her, and perseveres in her application.

But to return to the centurion's faith, and the point in which it contrasted with the nobleman's.

The nobleman's faith, then, was poor and narrow, because he conceived the exercise of Our Lord's power to be limited by the condition of His bodily Presence. The centurion's faith was large and generous, because he reckoned that Our Lord's power to heal was in no way dependent on His bodily Presence; that He had hosts of subordinate agencies at command in every district of Creation, who would execute His will immediately upon its being signified. This is the faith which Christ commends and approves, yea, which in an heir of sinful flesh and blood He marvels at. We shall attempt to show our own backwardness in this kind of faith, and to reprove ourselves, who have so much clearer light than he had, by the example of this centurion.

First, then, we remark that there is a tendency in the human mind,—a tendency which has made itself only too manifest in the history of the Church,—to crave after the visible bodily Presence of our Lord. Who can doubt that this tendency is at the bottom of the Roman doctrine of Transubstantiation? It is very easy to rail at Transubstantiation in the ordinary coarse way, and to decry the revolting absurdities which seem to be involved in such a tenet. But surely it were better far to consider whether there is not some instinct in the fallen mind of man, which may have prompted this fatal error, and whether we ourselves are not apt to be misled by the same instinct in another form. Putting aside all the subtleties which the wits of theologians have woven like so many cobwebs round this dogma, and the hard terms, such as “substance” and “accidents,” in which they have attempted to explain and vindicate it, I take the idea which the tenet conveys to a plain, simple-minded Romanist to be exactly this; that usually, and even under the circumstances of ordinary worship, Our Blessed Lord is locally in Heaven, observing us, no doubt, and listening to our prayers, but still at a vast distance from us; but that on the utterance by the Priest of the words of Consecration He is drawn down into the Church, and lies concealed under the consecrated elements, so that the state of things is really just the same as when He visited the Apostles from time to time after the Resurrection, and ate and drank with them, and showed them the wounds in His hands and side. A pious and simple Romanist, who has no head for subtleties, thinks that the Lord pays very similar visits to His Church now, whenever mass is celebrated, and that the elements are merely a disguise, which it pleases Him to wear while making the visit. And absurd as the tenet is, when stated in its bare logical form, there are feelings in the human heart which will explain its being taken up with. Are we quite sure that when reading the Gospels, we ourselves have never longed for the privilege vouchsafed to the

Apostles of having our Master with us in bodily Presence; of being able to put questions to Him on our difficulties and elicit answers; of being allowed to look up into the lineaments of His majestic and loving countenance, and see there the very expression which harmonized with the occasion, whether of tenderness, or trouble, or joy, or severity, or simple serene peace? And has a thought never insinuated itself that the Apostles, whatever their privileges afterwards, were great losers by the withdrawal of this sort of Presence; that there was in it a support, and a comfort, and a strength which could not be made up for by what occurred at Pentecost, or, in other words, by a spiritual Presence? In short, does the state of things represented in the Acts of the Apostles seem to us meagre and unsatisfactory in contrast with that glorious fulness of privilege, which they enjoyed while their Master was with them? It is probable that some such thoughts have at times crossed the minds of all devout persons. There is a certain phase of feeling in which the Lord is regarded as a human friend, association with whom in the flesh would be the greatest of all privileges, if it could be permitted, and would bring us under an influence for good which nothing else could supply. That is probably the feeling which Transubstantiation seems to meet in the mind of those who adopt it, and which, aided by a strong effort of the imaginative faculty, it seems to satisfy. The Lord is supposed to be among His people as heretofore,—as heretofore, to occupy a certain space upon earth, to the exclusion of all other parts of space,—as heretofore, (although in a great mystery,) to be the subject of sight and touch.

2. But how emphatically corrected and reproved by Scripture is the sentiment which I have described! Nothing can be clearer on the surface of the narrative than that the spiritual state of the Apostles after Pentecost was far higher, far more blessed, yea, one of far more intimate communion with the Lord than it had been previously. Whence the immense increase of

light, of joy, of power, contrasted with the ignorance and imbecility of their former state, if not from the fact that they were now one with their great Head, by the indwelling of His Spirit, in a manner in which they had never before been one? Their relation to Him was altered, and the latter relation was far closer, and so far more excellent and desirable, than the former had been. He begins to teach them this immediately after His Resurrection. When an attempt is made by one of His most devoted followers to spring towards Him with the old ardour of human affection, He withdraws Himself from the bodily handling, as that which was now to find place no longer, and the mysterious words fall from His lips, "Touch me not." Not that His heart of love to His followers had been in the smallest degree chilled by the great ordeal through which He had passed; not that His change of circumstances had rendered Him in the least degree cold and distant, or made Him push those to arm's length whom He had once delighted to gather round Him in the familiarities of friendly intercourse; but that by this first significant word He would have them understand that it was not any longer by the senses that they were to touch Him, and have intercourse with Him, but by the spiritual faculty of faith. In short, He would initiate them into the new relationship, and teach them that they must now no longer know Him as they once had known Him, "after the flesh," must seek Him no more locally, but in prayer, speak to Him by lifting up their hearts, draw down His power to their relief by communicating with Him invisibly through hope and trust. But alas! the natural and corrupt heart of man is not really satisfied with that spiritual Presence of Christ which has superseded His bodily and visible Presence. We like walking by sight much better than walking by faith; and liking this naturally, we imagine to ourselves a local presence of Christ upon earth in one particular spot, and under a particular form of matter, even when such an imagination involves the greatest absurdities. The same feeling would have led us, had we lived in the

time recorded by the Acts of the Apostles, to go back again in fond yearnings of memory to the days when our Master still walked visibly among men, and to pour forth sentimental regrets on the intercourse once vouchsafed, but which had now been withdrawn. But do the Apostles themselves ever manifest such yearnings or regrets? Is it not altogether the contrary? Do not cheerful activity, vigour, boldness, and a joyous assurance of their Master's support characterise all their proceedings after Pentecost; whereas before they are feeble, dull, timid, and sorrowful? After all, the mere support to be derived from the bodily presence of one wiser and better than ourselves,—what does it amount to? There is a good deal of our lower nature in such support,—but little of the higher. An animal may be bold when his master is close to him, cheering him on to the attack, or docile when the human eye is fixed steadily upon him, and exerts a kind of spell in subduing resistance. But it is the glory of man that he has a faculty which enables him to throw himself upon and realize the support of an unseen God,—a faculty which gives him a moral support, such as derives no aid from the senses. True it is that God has condescended to that infirmity of our nature, by which we demand a visible object of worship, by sending His Son into the world to reveal His Name and nature. But a definite apprehension of God having thus been established in the minds of men—a great Object of faith, level to our understanding and sympathies, having been once for all displayed,—this Object is withdrawn again into the invisible world, in order that our faith may have scope to exercise itself. If Christ were under our eyes, what trial of faith would there be in believing?

But let us rather ask with the centurion, what could the bodily Presence of Christ under our roofs, in our churches, do for us, which He is at present unable to do? "The natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ," says our Prayer Book, "are in Heaven, and not here." And Heaven is the great presence-chamber of God beyond the stars, distant we know not how far from our globe.



But what of that? "I am persuaded that neither . . . height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate" me "from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This earth is but a remote corner of God's universe,—an extremity of the great system, in whose centre sits enthroned the Son of God, in His risen and glorified humanity. But unto Him, as He has Himself assured us, is given "all power in heaven and in earth." His will permeates all space with a speed greater than that of the electric spark. He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands fast. By His word He is present in every district of Creation, upholding, informing, controlling all things. What though suns and systems of worlds roll between us and His glorified Body, do we think He cannot reach us? Are we not told that "angels, and authorities, and powers are made subject unto Him?" Has He no subordinate ministers, who can execute His behests on the moment that His will is signified to them? Is not the Holy Spirit a mysterious link between us and Him, knitting us as close to Him as the body, by the possession of life, is knit to the soul? If He is the centre of life and influence to us, as the soul is to the body, can there be any closer union with Him? Is not this more than enough to satisfy all the longings of the spiritual mind? And do we imagine that He cannot hear us at so great a distance? O unworthy thought! Who shall tell the speed with which prayer travels to His ear, or rather to His heart? Who shall tell how instantaneously the upward glance of an eye directed towards Him, the breath of a single devout aspiration, reaches His presence-chamber? We must enlarge our views of His power and His omniscience, if we desire that our faith, like the centurion's, should be commended by Him. "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? . . . Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." We must dismiss all notions of Him which would reduce Him again under the limited conditions, which it pleased Him once to assume, of an earthly body and a natural relationship.

Let us regard Him as the King of Heaven, whose fiat takes effect immediately upon earth. Let us learn to see in all events, arrangements, movements of this shifting scene, whether great or small, whether of public or private concernment, the execution of His will. Let us think of Him as everywhere present by His word. And let us find Him in our own hearts by the motions and instigations of His Spirit, nearer to our true personality, nearer to our consciousness and inner man, than even the most confidential friend can ever be. There let us hold communion with Him. There let us seek His face, and speak to Him, and take counsel with Him, and listen to His replies. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above :) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." Prayer is in the mouth of the Christian. Christ (by the Spirit) is in his heart. Verily He is not far from every one of us. He is a God nigh at hand, and access to Him easy.

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## CHAPTER II

### *ON FASTING COMMUNION*

"Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him."—ROM. xiv. 3

THE writer of these pages feels that he cannot respond to the call for a new edition of his "Office of the Holy Communion," without at all events attempting to adapt his work to the state of recent controversy on the subject. While he shrinks from putting forward his opinions, when they are uncalled

for, it seems as if he had no right to withhold them, when an opportunity, not of his own procuring, seems to challenge the expression of them. To put forth a new edition of a work (however humble its pretensions) on the English Communion Office, without any explicit notice of the beliefs and practices which are growing up amongst us in connexion with the Eucharist, and finding a ready acceptance with many devout minds, seems to him to be in itself an act of moral cowardice, and a withholding from his readers of that guidance which, as readers, they have some right to expect from him. He feels moreover that all questions of this kind are of deepest interest and importance. In a most instructive and valuable paper<sup>1</sup> on the subject, written shortly before his death, Dr. Biber has shown that "our spiritual life and communion in Christ, by the power of His resurrection, in the Sacrament of His last Supper, is the true bond of Christian Unity,—the true 'Eirenicon.'" If this be so, what a surpassing interest must attach to the doctrine of the Eucharist, and to those practices in connection with it, which are not purely ceremonial or ritual, but (like the practices to be commented upon in this and the following Chapter) carry doctrine with them, and are its outward exponents! May it not indeed be said generally, without exaggerating the importance of the subject, that the doctrine of the Eucharist which any man holds, is very much the key of his theological position? The profound Hooker begins his consideration of the Sacraments by a disquisition on the two natures and One Person of the Son of God,—a clear indication this, that, in the mind of that great thinker, these sacred symbols were not (as some with the characteristic shallowness of our time conceive of them) mere appendages and adjuncts of Christianity, but had their roots grappled into its most fundamental doctrines. This being the case, we cannot

<sup>1</sup> In a Serial called "Anglo-Catholic Principles Vindicated," Part xii., Treatise iii. (1871 to 1874. Oxford and London: James Parker & Co.)

be too jealous of the purity and integrity of Eucharistic doctrine. And a very evident corollary follows. We cannot be too jealous of the purity and integrity of Eucharistic practice. Devotional habits which seem on the surface plausible and attractive, and which are doubtless adopted with the view of doing reverence to Christ's ordinance, and securing a higher estimation of it, may yet have the seeds of corruption latent within them, and be fraught with danger. So the writer believes it to be with the two practices commented upon in this and the two following Chapters. They are practices known by him to be already widely prevalent, and which it is sought by the warmer advocates of them to erect into universal rules of devotion. But whether he regards the grounds on which they are rested, or the results to which they may be expected to lead, he cannot but view them with serious alarm. Let it be remembered that the more precious any gift of Christ is, the more certain it is (such is the evil in the heart of man, and such is the jealousy of our choicest treasures which the Devil shows) to be depraved, or at least misused. It is matter of history that this has been the case with the holy Eucharist. This Sacrament, Christ's best and holiest legacy to His Church, at once the epitome of the Gospel, and the means of applying its best blessings to our souls, has been erected by the doctrine of Transubstantiation into an object of idolatrous worship; one of its chief features has been profanely struck out of it by the withholding of the Cup from the laity, and the validity of the ordinance has been thereby (if we cannot say, annulled, yet) seriously imperilled; and the whole ordinance has been, by these deviations from true doctrine and correct practice, unspiritualized, materialized, carnalized, sensualized. Surely we ought to profit by the experience of the Church. The human mind having already in times past gone so far astray on this great subject, we should be very watchful over our minds for the future, lest any teaching should insinuate itself into them out of harmony with that of

holy Scripture and the Primitive Church. Such teaching should be resisted in its earliest approaches; for we may be very sure that, however specious and plausible it may be, it cannot fail to be mischievous.

The subject to which we propose to devote the present Chapter, is that of Fasting Communion,—the practice, adopted rigorously and strictly in the Roman Church, and rapidly creeping into our own, of abstaining from all food, solid and liquid, before our reception of the Sacrament. It is not however against the practice itself, but against the erection of it into a law of conscience, obligatory upon Christians, and indispensable to profitable reception, that we would enter our protest.

As a voluntary act of devotion on the part of individuals, who may find themselves quite capable of it in point of bodily strength, and may really feel that entire previous abstinence tends to make the mind more unclouded and calm than it can be after the reception of food, no right-minded and unprejudiced person can entertain any objection to it. Let such persons by all means be allowed and encouraged to do that which their own experience finds to be most edifying to themselves. Nay, I go further. I would say, Let the feelings and wishes of such persons be consulted in the arrangement of our Services. As very few constitutions indeed can without inconvenience and distress go without some slight refection until mid-day, let there be in our Churches early Communion for the accommodation of such persons as I have described, as well as because others, who set no particular value on the mere bodily abstinence, find their minds fresher and less worn at an early than at a late Communion. God forbid that, in direct violation of what His Apostle has taught us, we should despise or look down on any fellow Christian, who may find edification to himself in the observance of a restriction, which does not approve itself in at all the same way to our minds. Only then, as I will be careful not to “despise” a Christian brother—nay, as I will seek to

please him for his good to edification,—so, on the other hand, I will not allow him to “judge” me, nor indeed in a certain sense to “judge” himself. He must not make a law of conscience of his rule, either for me or for any one else. He must not teach for doctrines the commandments of men, and thereby hazard the depraving and nullifying of God’s commandments. He must not “add unto the words of the book of this prophecy” at the peril of having the plagues that are written in this book added unto him. And this is what, if hearsay may be trusted, corroborated as it is by facts which have come to the actual knowledge of many of us, is at present going on in our Communion. Church people are being taught in some quarters by their ordained pastors that it is a deadly sin to communicate after the reception of food, however slight,—that the elements of the holy Supper must be the first food which passes the lips of a day, or that they cannot lawfully be partaken of at all. The writer is in possession of good evidence that in some quarters this teaching is so thoroughly imbibed that it already operates (as it is sure to operate sooner or later) to a disuse of the Sacrament. Persons who have imbibed this teaching, and at the same time do not find themselves strong enough to observe the rule imposed upon their consciences, prefer absenting themselves altogether from the Communion, and flying in the face of our Lord’s plain command, “Do this in remembrance of me,” to violating a restriction which has, if I may so say, no authority whatever in its favour, either in holy Scripture, or in Reason, or in the standards of our own Church.

For what authority has this restriction, when regarded not as a voluntary compliance with a custom found by individuals to be edifying, but as a law of conscience?

I. It will be admitted that not a vestige of any warrant for it is to be found in holy Scripture; nay, that what we do find there bearing on the subject looks in a totally different direction. The earliest, and infinitely the most solemn, of all celebrations took

place when the communicants could not have been fasting; for our Lord instituted the Eucharist in the late afternoon,<sup>2</sup> and in the course of the Paschal Supper. It is true that the custom which obtained in the Apostolic Church of celebrating the Communion as part of a supper, and in connexion with an ordinary meal, was abrogated by St. Paul in the Corinthian Church as having led to irreverent abuses and even to excesses. The Sacrament was disentangled by his inspired authority from the ordinary supper, which had been the swaddling-clothes of its infancy, and made to stand alone. The object of thus disentangling it was that the holy Sacrament might be treated with greater reverence and devotion than heretofore. But in prescribing this greater reverence, the Apostle does not drop a single word from which it could be inferred that previous fasting at home is the way in which it is to be shown. Rather he implies that home is the right place for taking a meal, if we need or wish to take one. Put in common words, his rule is; "I forbid your making the Supper of the Lord a meal. If you really need a meal, you can take it in the house, before you come to Church." "What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?" . . . "If any man hunger, let him eat at home."

II. The Church of England, as a distinct Communion, the Church from which we received our Baptism and grafting into Christ, is absolutely silent on the subject. In neither the Communion Service, nor the Thirty-nine Articles, nor the Canons, is there a single vestige of this restriction, which is pretended to be so essential to a reverent participation, that the non-observance puts a communicant out of a state of grace (for such is the effect of mortal sin). Is not this rather startling? If Fasting Communion be of such vital importance, as some pretend, would not our Prayer Books have told us so? Of the Constitutions and Canons of the Church of England, which might

<sup>2</sup> "When the even was come," St. Matt. xxvi. 20; "in the evening," St. Mark xiv, 17.

reasonably be pleaded, not as constituting an obligation for the lay members of our Communion, but as showing the mind of the Church of England on subjects of controversy, there are nine<sup>3</sup> which deal with points of discipline in connexion with the Holy Communion; but in no one of them is there the slightest allusion to any rule of fasting previously to, and as qualifying for, the Sacrament. Among the Homilies is one in two parts, entitled "Of the worthy receiving and reverent esteeming of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ," where, if previous fasting had been deemed necessary either for the worthy reception or reverent estimation of the Sacrament, we might surely expect to find it recommended; but not so much as a hint is dropped upon the subject. So that, if any authority is sought for fasting Communion, imposed as a law of conscience, it must be sought outside the Scriptures and outside the authorized standards of the English Church, nor can it be said (to adopt a phrase from the Service for the Ordering of Priests) to be any part of "the Discipline of Christ, -as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and Realm hath received the same."

I am not ignorant that there are certain Canons and Constitutions of foreign<sup>4</sup> Churches, and even of our<sup>5</sup> own Church before the Reformation, which made fasting Communion obligatory, or imposed penance for "partaking of the Housel after eating." But among the acts of the six General Councils (to which the Statute of 1 Eliz. makes appeal as criteria in judgments of heresy, and the last of which was held as late as the latter half of the seventh century) no rule on the

<sup>3</sup> From XX. to XXVIII., both inclusive.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Kingdon in his pamphlet "Fasting Communion: how binding in England by the Canons" (Parker & Co. 1873), pp. 20, 21, gives a list of them from Mr. Blunt's "Theological Dictionary." They are all local, as he points out, and "cannot be supposed to bind beyond their own limits." The earliest of them is the Third Council of Carthage, A.D. 397.

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Kingdon refers to them, p. 23, and argues that they have been voided by long disuser.



subject was promulgated. But even supposing for argument's sake that it had been so, it might suffice to remark (even for those who would regard the decrees of a really Œcumenical Council with great veneration) that the 21st Article of our Church, to which all her Ministers have subscribed, asserts that "General Councils (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God,) may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation" (and an observance, which cannot be violated without mortal sin, must be necessary to salvation) "have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture."

And if to any it should seem that this Article attaches less weight than might have been expected to the decrees of General Councils, they may be reminded that, in dictating to the Churches of Rome and Corinth the line which they were to take in reference to the great casuistical question of those days, the partaking of meats offered in sacrifice to idols, the inspired Apostle St. Paul does not,<sup>6</sup> in a disciplinary matter of this kind, impose upon them arbitrarily as the law of their conscience the decree on that subject, which had been made in his own presence by the first of all councils, the Council of Jerusalem (as we might have expected him to do), but argues and settles the question chiefly on the ground of charity, urging upon those to whom he writes that, although there<sup>7</sup> was in truth nothing

<sup>6</sup> This is Mr. Kingdon's argument (p. 7). Most interesting and valuable are his remarks on the different mode in which St. Paul dealt with questions of faith and questions of discipline; and his opinion will carry with it all the more weight, because he stoutly maintains the Church's power to make rules, obligatory upon the conscience, for the well-being and guidance of her members. This power he holds to be conferred by the words, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth," &c.; and it forms the point of departure for his whole argument (p. 1).

<sup>7</sup> See Romans xiv., and 1 Cor. x. 14 to the end. According to the usually received chronology, the Council of Jerusalem

unclean of itself, and therefore the scruple about eating meats offered in sacrifice to idols was a false and groundless scruple, still it was to be respected in those weak brethren who entertained it, and who had a claim to consideration on the ground of their entertaining it conscientiously. As for Canons of Councils later than the four first centuries, it would be very easy to find several of them forbidding many things which we know to be either Scriptural and right, or else indifferent,—forbidding,<sup>8</sup> for example, the administration of the Cup to the laity, the marriage of priests, or even such trifles as the wearing of beards by the clergy.

I am not ignorant that particular fathers and doctors of the Church have spoken in such a manner as to show that in their times fasting Communion was the rule of the Church, from which it was considered profane to depart; that Chrysostom denies<sup>9</sup> in language

was held A.D. 53; the First Epistle to the Corinthians written A.D. 59; the Epistle to the Romans, A.D. 60. When therefore St. Paul wrote these Epistles, six or seven years had elapsed since the decree of the Council was made. Yet in his mode of resolving the question he makes no reference to it.

<sup>8</sup> This was done by the Council of Constance (A.D. 1415); which prescribed at the same time (one might almost say, in the same breath) Fasting Communion. Mr. Kingdon shows, however, (perhaps with a somewhat superfluous elaboration of the subject) that the prescription, after all, was only an *obiter dictum*. His Section on the Council of Constance (pp. 24-31) will abundantly repay perusal.

<sup>9</sup> Chrysost. Opp. Tom. iii. p. 668, D. E. In the passage referred to Chrysostom writes in exile to another exiled bishop, Cyriacus; and it is clear that some of his strong (and almost passionate) language is due to the smart which he felt at his ill-treatment by the Empress Eudoxia and the Alexandrian Patriarch. Mr. Kingdon points out that something of the edge is taken off from his language by his reference to St. Paul's having administered Baptism to the gaoler's family after they had supped. No one would now-a-days maintain that there is any obligation to fast *before Baptism*. Yet Chrysostom seems to have thought the administering Baptism to people not fasting, was at least as shocking as the communicating people *μετὰ τὸ φαγεῖν αὐτοὺς* ("after they had eaten"). His repudiation of the latter charge runs thus; "They vamped up many charges against me, and assert that I communicated certain persons

almost intemperate an accusation that he had communicated some persons who were not fasting, though the strength of this language is considerably modified, when in the context he invites his accusers to censure our Lord Himself for giving the Communion to His Apostles after supper; and that our own Jeremy Taylor, in his *Ductor Dubitantium*, speaks<sup>10</sup> of its

after they had eaten. If indeed I did so, may my name be blotted out of the roll of the bishops, and not be written in the roll of the orthodox faith; for, lo, if I did any such thing, Christ will cast me away out of his kingdom." From Chrysostom's "Homily before going into exile" Mr. Kingdon quotes another passage, in which he defends himself in a similar passionate strain against the distinct charge of having administered Baptism when he himself was not fasting. Here again he adduces the case of St. Paul and the gaoler;—not perhaps quite as much to the point as when the same case was adduced to defend communicating persons not fasting; for we can hardly suppose Paul and Silas to have had supper in the prison, though the gaoler and his family probably supped as usual. But of course the rule of Fasting Communion, if it binds communicants, must *a fortiori* be obligatory on the celebrant. Chrysostom's language is thoroughly discussed and disposed of by Mr. Kingdon (p. 68 *et sequent.*).

Probably the strongest Patristic passage in favour of Fasting Communion (stronger much than the passage of Chrysostom, whose language bears traces of irritation) is that in Augustine's letter to Januarius (Ep. liv. Tom. ii. Col. 126, sec. 8, F. G. Parisiis. 1689), and which in fairness should be quoted. "It is very evident that when the disciples first received the Body and Blood of the Lord, they did not receive it fasting. Are we therefore on that account to find fault with the universal Church, because it is always received by persons fasting? For *it pleased the Holy Ghost, for the honour of so great a Sacrament, that the body of the Lord should enter into the mouth of a Christian before other meats; for it is on that account that this custom is observed throughout the whole world.*" The words even of St. Augustine will hardly be thought to carry as much weight as the decree of the First Council of Jerusalem, which ran in the formulary, part of which he adopts; "Ἐδοξε τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι καὶ ἡμῖν" ("It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us"). Yet the abstaining from blood, and from things strangled, which were prescribed by this decree, is hardly reckoned a law of conscience among Christians of the present day. See, however, how Mr. Kingdon deals with the passage (pp. x. 19 and 68).

<sup>10</sup> Book iii., Chap. iv., Rule xv. 1. "It is a Catholick custom, that they who receive the Holy Communion, should

being a Catholic custom to receive fasting, which custom he that despises "gives nothing but the testimony of an evil mind," though he expressly adds that it is not a duty commanded by God, and admits also that there may in certain cases be a necessity of eating before Communion. We need not "despise" the custom itself, much less the persons who from a sentiment of devotion think fit to observe it, and find the observance edifying. But the opinions of ever so many doctors and fathers cannot make a canon of discipline, or in any sense bind the consciences of the faithful;—we may respect the opinion, and those who hold by it, without feeling bound to surrender our conscience into their hands.

It is somewhat noticeable that, at the very time when some ecclesiastics in our Church are seeking to re-establish fasting Communion, and insisting upon its observance, others of an opposite school are introducing into their Churches Evening celebrations, not indeed as at all essential or obligatory, but as the only way, in their view, of providing opportunities of communicating for certain classes, whose engagements do not admit of attendance in the forenoon. Perhaps this is one of the numerous instances, in which one extreme

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receive it fasting. This is not a duty commanded by God: but unless it be necessary to eat, he that despises this custom gives nothing but the testimony of an evil mind."

For this reference also I am indebted to Mr. Kingdon; who however omits to observe that in an earlier section of the *Ductor Dubitantium* (Book iii., Chap. iv., Rule xii. 7), the author puts fasting Communion on a level with the character of the Bread used, the mixed Chalice, and the exact form of words (precatory or recitative) used in Consecration, as a matter wherein nothing is ruled either by Scripture or "sufficient tradition." "That the Lord's Supper is sacredly and with reverence to be received is taught us by the Apostles: but whether this reverence ought to be expressed by taking it *virgine salivâ*, fasting, or not fasting, the Apostles left the Churches to their choice." On the first quoted passage, it may be observed that if persons find they cannot communicate fasting without a distracting headache or faintness, it is "necessary" for them to receive food previously.

of sentiment and practice in the Church begets another, —in which the pendulum of thought, having swung in one direction, not only comes back again to the perpendicular position, but swings equally far in the direction opposite. I must be doubly cautious what I say on this subject of Evening Communion, as having personally and for myself a strong instinct against them, which can hardly, I fear, be justified on grounds of reason. It must be admitted that no exception whatever can be taken against Evening Communion, either from the holy Scriptures, or from the Book of Common Prayer, or from the Constitutions and Canons of the Church of England. Nothing, as I believe, can be alleged against them but a very ancient and prevailing custom of the Church,<sup>11</sup> such as is quoted in favour of fasting Communion, worthy of respect, no doubt, as being very ancient and prevailing, but by no means to be erected into a law of conscience, and capable in its very nature of modification or alteration, to meet new circumstances of the Church and new phases of Society. And if I personally happen to feel (as I do, and many with me) that for myself Communion late in the evening, when the wear and worry of the day has sensibly told upon the freshness of my mind, is unedifying, I will not on any account make my conscience a law for my brother's, but will fully believe that he may and does find edification in a different view of the subject, or at all events that he thinks (surely a good and noble sentiment) that his own private edification is to be postponed to that of

<sup>11</sup> The Rev. W. E. Scudamore, in his very valuable and learned treatise, "*Notitia Eucharistica*" (Rivingtons, 1872), tells us (p. 34) that nine o'clock A.M. is the Canonical hour for the Celebration. I have somewhere seen an old Canon, though I cannot now lay my hand upon it, which strictly forbids (what now finds so much favour) the Celebration of the Communion before Matins. The fact is that these and other points of discipline vary, and must vary, with the varying exigencies of social life. There must be a plastic power in the Church by which discipline may be adjusted to the habits and wants of those who are subject to it.

his flock. Only then, if I entirely abstain from “judging” him, I shall expect that, in that reciprocity of charity which the Apostle enjoins, he shall abstain from “despising” me, and not call me party-names, or think me narrow and scrupulous, because his novel practice does not approve itself to my feelings.

And now to sum up this argument by some definite practical advice to the reader on the subject which has been considered.

How shall we direct our course in this matter?

The great point to be borne in mind throughout,—the great principle which should pervade and regulate our action,—is no doubt reverence for the Lord’s ordinance. St. Paul in his eleventh to the Corinthians enjoins this reverence upon those to whom he writes, and places his ban upon that profane treatment of the holy Supper, which had drawn down God’s judgments upon the Corinthian Church in the shape of sickness and death. But then it is very necessary to observe,—what the whole history both of the Jewish and Christian Churches teaches,—that there is such a thing as *false* reverence; and that false reverence, like false modesty, is as antagonistic as possible to the true. The Jews are guilty of false reverence, when, because they are forbidden to take the name of God *in vain*, they refuse to take it up into their lips at all, and, when the sacred Name of Jehovah occurs in reading the Hebrew Bible, substitute for it some lower equivalent, Adonai or Elohim. If a man should have his Bible bound in cloth of gold, with jewelled bosses at the corner, and should assign it the most honourable position in his library, and should carefully dust it every day and then replace it, but never take it down to open and read it, this would not be true but false reverence. God gives us the Bible to be read,—to be read upon our knees with prayers and tears,—to be worked into our minds by constant reading, and then to be acted out in our lives; and we cannot show greater real reverence to His holy Word than by letting our copy of it be

marked with our pencil for easier reference, and worn in its leaves with constant attrition of devout fingers. And in like manner our Lord gives us the holy Supper to be *used*, that we may receive it, and receive it very often, not that we may stand at a distance from it in misdirected awe and trembling, crying out, "What an awful thing it is! and what a precious thing it is! and what a burning bush it is! and what a very Holy of holies it is!" (all which is true, no doubt, yet truth which must not be misapplied) but that we should "take and eat this in remembrance of Him," and, eating and drinking, should have our souls strengthened and refreshed "by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the Bread and Wine." Be quite sure of this, then, that any sentiment or practice which has a tendency to lessen the frequency of Communion, and to deprive the Lord's Table (I do not say of attendants, but) of communicants, whether it be the ignorant superstition of a poor person, out of which the clergyman tries to reason him, or the more refined and cultivated superstition of the educated, which loves to erect barriers round the ordinance, which the Lord hath not erected, and to say, "Touch not, taste not, handle not," where He hath thrown open to us the tree of life freely,—all this equally looks and leads in a wrong direction. Our whole efforts should be directed to a frequent *use* of the Lord's Supper, with the greatest reverence and devotion, in the interests of our own spiritual life.—But how shall we show the greatest reverence and devotion? It is to be remembered that reverence, though it does not lack its external symptoms, yet has its seat in the heart and mind, and that the qualifications necessary to make the Lord's Supper available are qualifications of the heart and mind,—Repentance, Faith, and Love. Above all things, it is necessary that we should pray earnestly, and from the very depths of our heart, in communicating; and prayer is a mental act. Then let our object be to have our mind in such a frame as may facilitate prayer and other mental exercises,—to have it calm, quiet, fresh, and as

vigorous as may be. Very many people will feel that this frame of mind is most readily attained in the early morning, when the powers are newly recruited by rest, when the temptations, worries, and disquietudes of the day have not yet opened fire upon them, and before they have looked at their letters, those daily recurring pests of a high civilisation. Such persons will prefer communicating, wherever they can do so, in the morning. Let them do so by all means, and let their convenience and wishes be consulted; only let them not presume to "judge" others who prefer a later and longer celebration, perhaps from thinking that Morning Prayer and Litany beforehand are (as indeed they are) an excellent preparative of the mind.—As for the body, that should surely be treated in whatever way is found by experience to be most conducive to the freshness and vigour of the mind. And this will vary with different people. It may be quite conceived that there are many, who not only find themselves quite able to support total abstinence before an early celebration, but find their minds to be in this manner more nimble, and less impeded in their free action. With others, on the other hand, and these perhaps the greater number, the mind will be found to be more calm, livelier, and better suited to the work before it after a slight refection, than when all food has been denied to the body. In that case, let there not be one moment's hesitation as to taking food previously. Surely the mind is not to be hindered in its work by laying the body under austere conditions, which God has nowhere imposed. The body should be viewed in the matter as entirely instrumental and ancillary. This is not the place to enter into an historical investigation; but it may be gravely questioned whether the previous fasting which was made such a point of in the mediæval Church, had not reference to a state of things long since passed away,—the practice of heavy breakfasts,<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Mr. Kingdon's very pertinent remarks on this point (pp. 38, 39, 43, 44, 98); and particularly his quotation from Disraeli's "Curiosities of Literature" as to the period and the effects of the introduction of tea, coffee, and chocolate as morning beverages (p. 85).



accompanied with large potations of wine and intoxicating liquids. Certainly the present light breakfasts are of comparatively modern date.

These counsels are commended to the reader, that if they approve themselves to him, as in accordance with Scripture, Reason, and the teaching of our own Church, he may adopt and act upon them. While in the spirit of Christian liberty we resent the imposition of any and every yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which God and His Church have not imposed, we believe that the only successful mode of dealing with the question before us, when not advocated as a Christian obligation, but merely as a godly and ancient custom, which may still be found profitable in many cases, is the method which St. Paul applies to an earlier case of conscience. Let mutual respect, and consideration, and love, be shown on both sides. Let not those who find the stricter practice to be of advantage to themselves, "judge" those who adopt the laxer. Let not those who adopt the laxer "despise" those who prefer abiding by the stricter. Let each communicate in the manner which he finds most profitable, without for a moment presuming to censure those who prefer a different manner. For "why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

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## CHAPTER III

## ON NON-COMMUNICATING ATTENDANCE

“They gathered every man according to his eating. And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them.”  
—EXOD. xvi. 18, 19, 20

WE spoke in our last Chapter of Fasting Communion. There is another practice connected with the Eucharist, which has crept into our Church of late, and at present prevails to a great extent, which we cannot but regard with serious alarm, as a departure from the true use of the Sacrament, and as tending to corrupt and undermine the true doctrine of it. This is the practice of non-communicating attendance, that is, remaining in the Church during the entire celebration, as an inferior act of devotion having a quasi-sacramental efficacy, without presenting one's-self as a communicant. I say, *as an inferior act of devotion having a quasi-sacramental efficacy*; because, of course, if practised with other motives and views, non-communicating attendance might be quite harmless, perhaps in some cases desirable. It might very reasonably be thought that for young people about to be confirmed, to witness the celebration of the Lord's Supper once or twice, before they are called upon to take part in it themselves, might be advantageous and impressive, might take off that gloss of novelty, which is so apt to distract people in exercises of devotion, and might help them to communicate, when the time came for their doing so, more quietly and calmly, and with less excitement. Again there might arise a necessity (or what is next door to a necessity) for the practice we are calling in question. Children old enough to come to Church with their

parents, might yet be too young to find their way home alone. Clergy who have already communicated, and would find it unedifying to repeat that action, and impossible to do so with any freshness and liveliness of devotional feeling, might yet be obliged to lend their assistance at a second celebration, lest the service should be unduly and inconveniently prolonged. And I would add that in choral celebrations chorister boys might, in my judgment, be properly enough kept through the whole Office, on the ground of their function being a necessary one, if only the service could be contracted within such limits as not to weary and disgust the minds of children; for unless this condition were secured, it might be wiser and more charitable to the lambs of the fold to dispense with the choral celebration altogether. But all these cases, and others which might be imagined, have a totally different colour from that which non-communicating attendance assumes, when adopted as a piece of devotion, and as a normal practice of the spiritual life. Looked at in this light, it has very strong attractions for devout minds; nor need we doubt, while most solemnly and earnestly protesting against it, that they who practise it do so under the belief that they gain edification from it. The idea that the Lord Himself becomes, after and in virtue of the consecration of the elements, externally present in the Church, quite apart from His reception by the penitent and believing communicant, and quite independently of any action of the human mind whereby His presence is recognised,—this idea lays the mind under a certain spell, which is found to make worship easier, and to excite a sort of reverence, which seems to faint and flag, as soon as Christ is thought of rather in connexion with the minds of His people than with the place in which they are gathered together. But what if the idea be an effect of the imagination, and will not endure the scrutiny of holy Scripture and reason? and what if the reverence founded upon it be a false and factitious reverence, such as we gave some examples of in our last Chapter?

It ought certainly to make those who practise non-communicating attendance very suspicious of the reverence engendered by it, that it does not lead to the use of what God has offered ; or rather, that it does not lead to such use of it, as alone God has prescribed and sanctioned. It was pointed out in the last Chapter that it would be false reverence, if a man were to bind his Bible in a most costly manner, and give it the highest place in his library, and keep it scrupulously free from dust and soil, and yet never read it. And why? because the Bible is given us to be read. Now there can be no manner of doubt that our Lord gave His holy and precious Supper to be received. The words of Institution enjoin reception in the first place, even before they specify the character of the things received ; "Take, eat ; this is my body. . . . Drink ye all of it ; for this is my blood." If therefore a man makes of this gift of Christ another use, never indicated by the Giver, while declining that use which is indicated, surely there is room for doubt whether the devotional sentiments, which he excites in his mind by this other use, are sound and good. Is a man safe and right, however well-intentioned he may be, if he persists in putting God's gifts to uses for which it does not appear that God intended them? The manna, which was a type of the holy Supper, or I should rather say of Christ in the holy Supper, was given for the nourishment of the people in their pilgrimage through a barren land which yielded no sustenance for man. And the ordinance of the manna made it imperative to use it for sustenance. "They gathered every man according to his eating. And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning." And what was the consequence of violating this precept? The consequence was that what was designed as nourishment, when treated otherwise than as nourishment, became offensive. "Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses ; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank : and" (for such misuse of God's precious gift) "Moses was wroth with them." I do

not wish to indulge in fantastic application of the typical parts of holy Scripture. Yet I think that, without any undue and excessive allegorizing, we may here find a lesson against using God's gifts in a way and for an end for which He has not appointed them to be used. Gifts thus perverted from their right use become a bane instead of a blessing. Be it remembered that Idolatry had its beginning in such a perversion. God gave the sun to shed light and warmth throughout the universe, and the moon to yield her placid silver light by night; and the earliest beginning of departure from God was when men began to detach these and other objects of nature from the practical uses to which God designed them to be put, and to contemplate them independently both of their author and their end. Thus contemplated, they became objects of religious veneration, and did more to injure men morally than to benefit them naturally. And a fate somewhat similar has befallen the means of grace, which are the ordinances of the spiritual world, and especially the holy Communion, which is the highest of them. Separated in men's thoughts and ideas from its use as a means of strengthening and refreshing the soul, the consecrated wafer has been turned into an idol and worshipped. A priest lifts it in his hands above a prostrate crowd of men and women, who fall down and adore it. This dreadful corruption and depravation of the Lord's ordinance is intimately connected with the treating it devotionally in a way which God has not prescribed—in short, with non-communicating attendance.—Therefore *obsta principiis*. Let not this practice, so closely connected with the corruption of God's ordinance, make further encroachments upon us.

But let us proceed to consider the practice somewhat more methodically.

1. And, first, let us observe what is the characteristic and leading idea of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This characteristic idea, duly seized, will serve to fence off many errors. We hear much talk of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. And

beyond all question He is most really and truly, though in no wise corporeally, present in the holy Supper. It may be very much doubted, however, whether the Real Presence is the chief and most characteristic blessing of the ordinance. The mere Presence of Christ is covenanted to the two or three gathered together in His Name and for His worship, even when there is no administration of this highest ordinance. Union with Christ, which of course involves, but at the same time goes far beyond, the Presence of Christ, is the characteristic feature of the Lord's Supper. The whole symbolism of the ordinance teaches us this. As the bread and wine passes into the living frame of the recipient, and becomes by the natural process of digestion assimilated to that frame, so, wherever there is in the communicant repentance and faith, the Body and Blood of Christ are received spiritually,—the great difference between the natural and spiritual process being this, that in the first the food becomes assimilated to, and closely incorporated with, the frame which receives it, in the other the spiritual and moral frame becomes assimilated to the nourishment of which it partakes, which nourishment is Christ. Our Lord foresaw the Eucharist, and spoke anticipatively of its effects, when He said; “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” Observe, “Except ye *eat* the flesh and *drink* the blood,”—except the human nature, which He assumed in His Incarnation, and which in His death was sundered into its two component elements, flesh, and blood which is the life thereof, is transfused into your souls by spiritual manducation, and thus made the means of quickening the soul, and imparting to it true vigour, and drawing it up into union with the Lord Himself, “ye have no life in you.” How, let me just ask, does non-communicating attendance look, when placed side by side with such a text as this, “Except ye *eat* the flesh and *drink* the blood”?—When we seize the true idea of the ordinance, as conveying not so much the Presence of

Christ (although that it does subordinately) as union with Christ, do we not at once perceive that non-communicating attendance is out of harmony with it? For in order to union with Christ in the Supper, there must be reception. Without actual reception, there is no more possibility of union with Christ in the Supper, than there is of an assimilation between our bodies and the elements of bread and wine.

2. But now to come to the direct teaching of holy Scripture on the subject. I have already noticed the circumstance that, in the words of Institution, the precept to partake of the Sacrament takes precedence of the description of its nature, as if it were only in connexion with the recipient that the Bread and Wine become the Body and Blood of Christ,—as if He had said, “Receive it, and [in the reception] it shall become to you my body and my blood.” But take these striking observations on the same circumstance from an eminent divine of the diocese of Norwich, whose piety and profound study of his subject and of all collateral theology, give him every right to be heard, and oh that he might be listened to!

“The holy Eucharist is a sacrificial rite, commemorative of the Sacrifice of the death of Christ. By it we show and plead before God the atoning merits of His Passion. But this representation of His Sacrifice is in holy Scripture inseparably connected with the *consumption* of the symbols, which represent the Body that was broken and the Blood that was shed upon the Cross. He did not say, Offer this, my Body, and this, my Blood; and then, if ready and desirous, partake of them. On the contrary, the command to take, eat and drink came first; and then He told them that the bread which they were eating was His Body, and the wine which they were drinking was His Blood. By the order of His words, He implies that the commemoration of His Sacrifice by the recipient is altogether dependent on his eating that Bread and drinking of that Cup. . . . In other words, if we do not com-

municate, we are not commemorating His Sacrifice ; unless we partake we do not offer.”<sup>1</sup>

The advocates of non-communicating attendance rest their arguments very mainly on the assertion that the Eucharist is a sacrifice as well as a sacrament. We need not deny,—rather we would stoutly assert with them,—that it is (to use again the words of the author just quoted) “a sacrificial rite, commemorative of the Sacrifice of the death of Christ.” But to which of the several species of sacrifice does the Eucharist belong? We, as faithful members of the Church of England, who accept her formularies as for us the true interpretation of holy Scripture, will seek an answer to this question in our own Communion Office. The effective part of the rite having been concluded, and the reception having taken place (mark that circumstance ; for it is an important feature of the case), and the Lord’s Prayer having been a second time recited, to inaugurate the Post-Communion,—then is said as followeth ; “O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept<sup>2</sup> this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.” According to the teaching of our own Church, then, the Eucharist, in whatever *other* sense it may be a sacrifice (and into this point, as it would carry us too far from the subject now before us, we do not propose at present to enter) is most assuredly “a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.” Now under the old Law there were three grand species of sacrifice,

<sup>1</sup> Rev. W. E. Scudamore’s “Notitia Eucharistica” (Rivingtons, 1872), page 398.

<sup>2</sup> These words in King Edward the Sixth’s First Prayer Book (A.D. 1549), immediately succeeded the manual acts prescribed in the Prayer of Consecration, and the Prayer from which they are drawn constituted the latter part of the Prayer of Consecration, as our Prayer for the Church Militant constituted its former part. In the Second Prayer Book (A.D. 1552), the Prayer for the acceptance of the Sacrifice was relegated to the Post-Communion,—not, we may be sure, without great significance. The Sacrifice is not offered at all except by communicants. “Unless we partake,” says Mr. Scudamore, “we do not offer.”



which brought out respectively three distinct features of the rite. There was the offering which betokened *Self-dedication*, like the Burnt-Offering; the offering which betokened *Expiation*, like the Sin-Offering; and the offering which betokened Thanksgiving, like the Peace-Offering, of which the Thank-Offering was a variety. According to the express assertion of our Prayer Book, the Holy Communion belongs to this last class;—it is, “this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,” a thank-offering or peace-offering. Now one great characteristic feature of all thank-offerings and peace-offerings was, that it was to be partaken of by the worshipper on the very day it was offered; “When ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord, offer it at your own will. On the same day it shall be eaten up; ye shall leave none of it until the morrow: I am the Lord.” “The law of a peace-offering,” says Bishop Andrewes,<sup>3</sup> “is, he that offers it must take his part of it, eat of it, or it doth him no good.” And this was most especially the case with the most solemn and dignified of all thank-offerings,—that of the Passover. To “keep” the Passover was<sup>4</sup> to “eat” the Passover; it could not be kept except it was eaten. If any person belonging to a Passover company, failed to eat a piece of the lamb (of at least the size of an olive), he was considered as being excluded altogether from the sacrifice, just as if he had not been at all in the mind of him who offered it. For him the victim was *not* slain; his interest in it was null and void.

We conclude hence that though there be a sacrifice in the Eucharist, even a thank-offering and a Christian Passover, it is a sacrifice so intimately bound up with the Sacrament, that it cannot be offered, nor can we have any the smallest benefit from it, unless the Sacrament be partaken of. The keeping separate the

<sup>3</sup> Sermon IV. of the Resurrection, vol. ii. p. 251, quoted by Mr. Scudamore, p. 399.

<sup>4</sup> Again I am indebted to Mr. Scudamore for this remark, pp. 399, 400.

Sacrifice and the Sacrament has no ground whatever in the Word of God.

3. Nor does this separation of what God has joined together find any warrant whatever in the practice of the Primitive Church. Nay, that practice contains implicitly a strong protest against non-communicating attendance. Such attendance was indeed recognised in the Church of the third and fourth centuries,—but, so far from being recognised as a privilege, it was imposed as a penance. The penitents of those days were divided into four orders, who had different places assigned to them in the Church, and different privileges allowed them. The furthest advanced of these orders were called *Consistentes* (or, standers together), from their being allowed to stand with the faithful near the altar, and see the oblation (of the Eucharist) offered, but yet they might neither make their own oblations, nor partake of the Eucharist with the congregation. That even this was considered a heavy censure, may be gathered from a canon of the council of Nice,<sup>5</sup> which prescribes two years of this penance for the crime of idolatry (after ten years in lower stages), and speaks of the persons subjected to it, as communicating with the people in prayers only, without the oblation. The

<sup>5</sup> Canon XI. It runs thus :—“As to those who have transgressed without necessity, or without loss of their substance, or without peril or any thing of that sort,—a thing which hath happened under the tyranny of Licinius,—the Synod hath decreed, albeit they are unworthy of clemency, nevertheless to deal indulgently with them. As many of them therefore as sincerely repent, shall spend three years (assuming them to have been formerly in communion) among the hearers : and for seven years [more] they shall be prostrators : and then for two years they shall communicate with the people in prayers only, without [being admitted to] the oblation.”

Mr. Scudamore tells us (p. 394), with a reference to Bona, that “there is an almost universal *consensus* of the better Divines, Ritualists, and Canonists of the Church of Rome in favour of the historical statement that has been now made, viz., that, with the above-named exception of the *Consistentes*, ‘no one was permitted to be present at the Sacred Mysteries but those who were able to offer and to partake of the things offered.’”

use which we wish to make of this disciplinary canon is to show from it what was the view taken by the early Church of the subject under consideration. If non-communicating attendance had been in those days regarded as a privilege, and held to be a legitimate source of edification and comfort (which is the view now sought to be inculcated in our Church), it never could have been inflicted as a penance. The penalty to which the *Consistentes* had to submit was, "Show his eyes and grieve his heart;" let him be tantalized with the mere spectacle of a privilege open to others, but which in his present state cannot be his; let him be like the cripple at the Beautiful gate of the Temple placed in sight of a glorious and soul-inspiring worship in which he himself is shut out from joining. It must be admitted that this estimate of the position of a non-communicating attendant is totally different from that which finds in such a position a stimulus to reverence and devotional sentiment, and a help of no mean value to communion with Christ. And what shall we say of the recognised impossibility, implied in the terms of the canon, of participating in the *oblation* without communicating? Does it not run in the very teeth of this new-fangled notion, that we may join in the sacrificial part of the ordinance, while holding entirely aloof from its sacramental part?

4. As regards, lastly, the mind of those who drew up our own Office of the Holy Communion, and of those who brought it into its present state, it is often pleaded by the advocates of non-communicating attendance that nowhere in that Office do we find any direction for non-communicants to withdraw. This is no doubt a matter of fact; but is a matter of fact which does not stand by itself; and which, when quoted as if it did, conveys an impression very wide of the truth. Our Communion Office was not all at once brought into its present shape. It passed through several revisions, before it reached the exact form in which it now stands. The First Prayer Book of King Edward the Sixth, put forth in 1549, contained a rubric after the Offertory Sentences, and

*before* the direction to set the bread and wine upon the Altar, to this effect; "Then so many as shall be partakers of the holy Communion, shall tarry still in the quire, or in some convenient place nigh the quire. . . . All other (that mind not to receive the said holy Communion) shall depart out of the quire, except the ministers and clerks" (whose functions might be necessary as assistants, though they themselves might have communicated at an earlier hour). Such was the first rule of the Reformed Church on the subject, and it certainly does not favour non-communicating attendance. The second Reformed Prayer Book, put forth three years afterwards (in 1552), made a step in advance. An address was then introduced, great part of which we still retain in the Exhortation which is to be used, in case the Minister "shall see the people negligent to come to the holy Communion." In this address, as then put forth, were contained these words; "And whereas ye offend God so sore in refusing this holy Banquet, I admonish, exhort, and beseech you, that unto this unkindness ye will not add any more. Which thing ye shall do, if ye stand by as gazers and lookers on them that do communicate, and be no partakers of the same yourselves. For what thing can this be accounted else, than a further contempt and unkindness unto God? Truly it is a great unthankfulness to say nay when ye be called; but the fault is much greater, when men stand by, and yet will neither eat nor drink this holy Communion with other. I pray you what can this be else, but even to have the mysteries of Christ in derision? . . . . Wherefore, rather than you should so do, depart you hence, and give place to them that be godly disposed."

This severe discouragement of non-communicating attendance in the Reformed Church had its effect. The practice of hearing Mass without communicating (as a sort of compensatory act for communicating rarely or never) had its neck broken. In the time of the great Revision of 1662, the practice no longer existed;<sup>6</sup> and

<sup>6</sup> See "Notitia Eucharistica" (pp. 395, 396), from which this account is drawn.

accordingly, on the assumption doubtless that it would never be revived, the protest against gazing and looking on, having lost its point, was quietly expunged from the address in which it occurred. Such is the reason why our present Office lacks any definite protest against non-communicating attendance. But in view of these plain facts of history, it can never be said that the Reformed Church approves of the practice, or indeed does otherwise than most seriously disapprove of it.

We have argued the question, as in the last resort it must be argued, on the grounds of Reason, Scripture, the Book of Common Prayer, and the views of the Primitive Church. But if any practice could be put out of court by its manifest tendency, and by the effect which it is likely to have upon the general run of the people who compose our congregations, this would surely be so excluded. It cannot indeed be denied that there is a considerable number of very devout persons, chiefly belonging to one particular school, who *do* communicate very frequently, and thus habitually use the Lord's ordinance for the purpose it was given for, who yet mix with it occasionally the practice of non-communicating attendance, warmly advocate that practice as correct in theory, and wish to see it universally adopted. We do not wish to say a single word which could be construed as disparaging the devotion and simple-hearted piety of these persons, or as manifesting a want of appreciation of the graces of Christian character, which many of them display. But we ask them to consider what must infallibly be the effect of their teaching and example upon people, who do not rise above the ordinary level of Christian character and the ordinary standard of Christian attainment. We all know how many scruples the hard-worked man of the world either has, or invents, against the duty of communicating; how partly a genuine and commendable feeling of his own unworthiness, partly a fear of being upon too close quarters with God, and being driven to pursue a standard of piety for which his will has not yet mustered up courage, partly an apprehension that familiarity with the ordinance

may lead him to hold it cheap, operate to make him a very infrequent attendant at the Table of the Lord. What must (sooner or later) be the effect of instilling into his mind by precept and example, and by the putting in his hand pious little books which have a strong distillation of Romanism in them, that the Lord may be worshipped acceptably, and the Sacrifice once offered on Calvary pleaded effectually with God, by mere attendance at the holy Table, while only a sorry handful of people present themselves to communicate? The effect must certainly be to diminish the number of communicants, even if the number of attendants should be increased.—And can such an effect be contemplated without dismay, whether we consider the precept, which makes the observance of the Eucharist binding on us; “Drink ye *all* of it,” or the nature of the blessing received in it; “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of” (the means of partaking in) “the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?” “Except ye *eat* the flesh of the Son of man, and *drink* his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

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## CHAPTER IV

### AURICULAR CONFESSION

“Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath.”—2 KINGS iv. 23

THE practice of Auricular Confession may not seem in the nature of things to have any connection with our subject, which is the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It is quite conceivable that this practice might obtain in a Church, as a supposed means of grace and edification, without any special reference to the

highest ordinance of our Religion. But, as a matter of fact, this is not the course which things have taken. The Roman Church not only recognises the necessity of Auricular Confession<sup>1</sup> to the remission of sins, as being of Divine institution, but also binds the practice upon men's consciences by declaring it to be, wherever it may be had, an essential<sup>2</sup> prerequisite to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, without having gone through which we eat that bread, and drink that cup of the Lord unworthily, and are "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And a trace of this connection lingers still in our own Communion Office, though the confession there recommended is not made obligatory

<sup>1</sup> Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, Session XIV., Canons VI. and VII.

"Si quis negaverit, confessionem sacramentalem vel institutam, vel *ad salutem necessariam* esse jure divino; aut dixerit, modum secretae confitendi soli sacerdoti, quem Ecclesia catholica ab initio semper observavit, et observat, alienum esse ab institutione et mandato Christi, et inventum esse humanum: anathema sit.

"Si quis dixerit, in sacramento pœnitentiæ *ad remissionem peccatorum necessarium non esse jure divino*, confiteri omnia et singula peccata mortalia, quorum memoria cum debita et diligenti præmeditatione habeatur, etiam occulta, et quæ sunt contra duo ultima decalogi præcepta, et circumstantias, quæ peccati speciem mutant . . . . anathema sit."

<sup>2</sup> Session XIII. Cap. 7, and Can. XI.

. . . . "Quare communicare volenti revocandum est in memoriam ejus præceptum: Probet seipsum homo. Ecclesiastica autem consuetudo declarat, eam probationem necessariam esse, ut nullus sibi conscius mortalis peccati, quantumvis sibi contritus videatur, *absque præmissâ sacramentali confessione ad sacram eucharistiam* accedere debeat, quod a Christianis omnibus, etiam ab iis sacerdotibus, quibus ex officio incubuerit celebrare, hæc sancta synodus perpetuo servandum esse decrevit, modo non desit illis copia confessoris: quod si, necessitate urgente, sacerdos absque præviâ confessione celebraverit, quamprimum confiteatur.

. . . . "Et, ne tantum sacramentum indignè, atque ideo in mortem et condemnationem sumatur, statuit atque declarat ipsa sancta synodus, *illis quos conscientia peccati mortalis gravat, quantumcunque etiam se contritos existiment, habitâ copiâ confessoris, necessariò præmittendam esse confessionem sacramentalem.*"

upon the conscience, and is distinctly recognised as not being universally necessary. Still the subject is introduced in connexion with the Eucharist. "Because it is requisite that no man should come to the holy Communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore if there be any," who is unable to quiet his own conscience in the manner before described, and requires "further comfort or counsel," he is exhorted to come "to some . . . . discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness." Private Confession then rightfully challenges a place among those practices which have grown up around, and in connexion with, the Eucharist. Of all those practices there is probably none which has graver moral or spiritual bearings. And it is one of present interest; for on all sides of us it is being attempted to make the passage of the Communion Office above quoted the ground for introducing into our own Church a species of Confession, with which she has no sort of sympathy, and which is not borne out by any of her formularies fairly understood and interpreted.

Let us examine, then, into the truth on this much agitated subject. And, in ascertaining it, let us resolve to be guided exclusively by holy Scripture, as it is interpreted for us by the Book of Common Prayer, which represents the sense in which Scripture was understood by those Christians who lived nearest to the times of the Apostles.

The only kind of Confession which is or can be objected to by serious and devout persons, and which thus really comes into controversy at all, is that called in the Roman Church auricular, this word meaning that it is whispered into the ear of the priest. As the first point in any discussion is to be well acquainted with the subject we are talking about, it is well to note that there are three marks or features, which charac-



terise this kind of Confession,—universality, periodicity, and formality. *Universality.* It is held to be binding upon all persons, in whatever condition of life, and indispensable, if not actually to salvation, yet to the health and vigour of the spiritual life,—just as we ourselves hold the two Sacraments of the Gospel to be generally (*i.e.* universally) necessary to Salvation. *Periodicity.* It is to be practised, not once for all, but constantly at stated periods during the spiritual life, and more especially as a necessary preliminary to, and preparation for, the Holy Communion. *Formality.* Which word is not here used in any bad or derogatory sense, but in the sense in which all the ordinances of our own or any other Church are and must be formal, that is, there is a certain previously arranged method or rule of proceeding in them, necessary (or at least conducive) to that decency and order, with which the Apostle prescribes that all things in the Church shall be done. The person making confession kneels down by the side of the clergyman, who, dressed in his robes of office, sits while he receives it,—and uses a short formulary to the effect that he makes confession to God, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the priest there present, that since his last confession he has done so or so, or left undone so and so. When the Confession has all these features about it, *i.e.* when it is recognised by the parties practising it as universally necessary to salvation (or, at least, to the soul's well-being); when it is offered and received regularly at stated periods; and when it is practised after a certain prescribed rule and method, and with ecclesiastical formalities, it is then Auricular Confession in full blossom. And in cases where it has the two latter features without the first,—where it is not distinctly recognised as necessary to salvation or spiritual health (in which case of course the priest himself would have to practise it, as well as the penitent), but at the same time is carried on periodically and habitually as a normal practice of the spiritual life, and offered and received in set form and with the circumstantials of a religious

ordinance,—it is easy to see that in such cases it is tending in the direction of full-blown Auricular Confession, and only wants a little more development to become that. If it is once admitted that there is a very large number of persons who find stated periodic confession to a priest, made in due form, to be extremely helpful to their souls and very conducive to their growth in grace,—we may be sure that the erection of such a practice into an ordinance more or less indispensable is not very far off.

And this we must not disguise from ourselves is the condition of affairs, at which we in the Church of England have now arrived. Possibly the practice adverted to may not be carried on in the circle to which we belong, and for that reason we may have little cognizance of it at present; but one cannot take up a Church newspaper, or even a secular newspaper, which gives any Church intelligence, without seeing that it is a practice at present extensively and fast establishing itself in the convictions of many young persons who think seriously about religion, and of many of our devoutest clergy. It is no reason for dismissing the subject lightly that most of the persons who offer themselves to confess are young, or again that the majority of them are girls and young women (which no doubt is the case). Young people are to become old, and their moral and religious character will be stereotyped in youth. The girls of this generation are to be the mothers of the next; and who knows not the influence which a mother, if she pleases, can exercise in the formation of the religious character of her children? But even supposing that the class from which the recruits of the English Confessional are drawn, were not in itself an influential class, or a class which could ever be expected to leaven public sentiment, is it not a serious feature of the case that some of our devoutest clergy, men of learning, ability, and the highest possible character, do openly and avowedly inculcate this sort of Confession, if not as absolutely indispensable to the forgiveness of sin (which for the present, at least, they

disavow), yet certainly as very conducive to the health and well-being of the soul, and devote a considerable portion of their time to the hearing of it? That the practice recommended and enforced by them has already gained a good foothold in our Church is clear from the books of devotion which are circulated freely among us, books which undoubtedly contain passages of great beauty, and parts of which are very conducive to edification, while in other parts an attempt seems to be made to venture as near as possible to the margin of Romish error, and sometimes the barrier, which separates us from the Roman Church and its corruptions, seems to be overleapt altogether. That I may not seem to be speaking at random, I extract from a little illustrated manual of devotion entitled "The Path of Holiness, a first Book of Prayers for the Young, compiled by a Priest," the following passage, which immediately precedes the Office of the Holy Communion:—

#### FORM FOR SACRAMENTAL CONFESSION.

*Kneel down, and say:*

Father, give me your blessing, for I have sinned.

*When the Priest has given you the blessing, say:*

In the Name ✠ of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

I confess to God Almighty, before the whole Company of Heaven, and to you my father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, by my fault, by my own most grievous fault. Especially I accuse myself that (since my last Confession, which was . . . ago, when the penance that was given to me was . . . ) I have sinned.

*After your Confession, say:*

For these and all other my sins which I cannot now remember, I am heartily sorry, firmly purpose amendment, most humbly ask pardon of God; and of you, my spiritual father, penance, counsel, and absolution.

*Listen to the advice and the penance that the Priest gives you. When the Priest gives you Absolution, bow your head,*

*and pray God to absolve you in Heaven while His Minister absolves you upon earth.*

These forms would not be inserted in popular and attractive books of devotion, if they did not find persons to use them. And that they are very widely used is beyond all question. Many of our clergy devote large portions of their time to hearing confession. Not on new moons and sabbaths only, *i.e.* not only at the periods when the public ordinances of the Church are administered, but every day the people flock to the priest, to tender their private confessions, previously to, and as a necessary preliminary of, the receiving the holy Communion. We must not disguise from ourselves that Auricular Confession is becoming an established practice in the English Church.

Now I must remark that the Book of Common Prayer, which is for us the interpretation of the holy Scriptures, and represents the opinions and practices of the purest and most primitive age, not only preserves a strict and significant silence on such Confession as has the characteristics I have described, but even seems to discourage it. The only parts of the Prayer Book, to which appeal is or can be made in the matter, are the Exhortation to the Communion to be delivered on the Sunday or Holy-day immediately preceding the Celebration, and the Order for the Visitation of the Sick. These are the places on which advocates of the practice in question rely as giving support to their views. But surely they break down under them, when candidly examined.

(1.) First, as to the *universality* of the practice, which is the first feature of the full-blown system. The Exhortation in the Communion Office bids persons examine their lives and conversations by the rule of God's commandments, and, having by this examination ascertained their offences, to bewail the sinfulness of them, and to confess themselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life. And then, after some advices as to the necessity to a profitable Communion, of restitution and satisfaction, where the

offence has been against our neighbours, of forgiveness of injuries, and generally of the breaking off of all sins by repentance, follow the words from which the practice of Auricular Confession is inferred to have the sanction of the Church. "And because it is requisite, that no man should come to the holy Communion but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore if there be any of you, who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness." If words have any meaning, surely these words imply that the coming privately to the Parish Priest, or to the discreet and learned Minister, is not the best thing to be done, but the second best. So far then from being urged by the Prayer Book as universal, Private Confession is merely conceded as exceptional. There may be scrupulous or timorous consciences for which such a specific is needed, and to whom therefore it is recommended; but the very point of the passage seems to be that it is *not* recommended to persons in general; *they* will do best, with the assistances of God's grace, to resort to no confessional but His.—Similarly, in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick, the case in which special confession is to be recommended, and a special absolution bestowed upon the patient, is indicated as exceptional by the significant particle "if." The sick person is at a certain point of the Office to "be moved to make a special Confession of his sins, *IF* he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter." And His Confession having been made, the Priest is to absolve him, *IF* he humbly and heartily desire it, in a certain prescribed form. But surely it is not every one whose conscience in dying is troubled with some weighty matter. The Prayer Book would never contemplate this as the

normal state of things. Our services are all constructed on the hypothesis that the persons using them are in a right state of mind ; that, for example, the Parents and Sponsors who bring children to baptism are serious and religious persons, interested in the child's spiritual welfare ; that parties who offer themselves for marriage are sincerely desirous of God's blessing upon their union ; that the corpse brought for burial is that of a person who has departed this life in God's faith and fear. And so in the service for Visitation of the Sick. The patient is assumed, in the judgment of charity, to be in the main a servant of God, one who has lived in His faith and fear. Still, as there may be, and doubtless often are, cases, in which some grave sin, hidden from the eyes of all but God, is rankling in the conscience of a dying man, and since this would effectually preclude that quietness of conscience, with which it is so desirable that the soul should pass into the presence of its Judge, the patient is to be exhorted, if he be conscious of any such thing, to be at one with Truth in respect to it, in order that he may be at one with God, —not to go out of life a hypocrite, cloaking under a respectable exterior some hidden iniquity. And that being done, in case it should be a relief to him to hear once again before his death the sentence of God's absolution of all penitent and believing souls from the mouth of His minister (for it seems to be assumed that some minds will attach a greater, others a less value, to a formal ministerial absolution), a special form is provided, stronger and more emphatic than that employed in the daily Office and the Communion Office, in which the Priest is to absolve him. But surely there is here no sort of warrant for the *universal* practice of special Confession, even upon a death-bed, much less in time of health.

(2.) Then as to the periodical recurrence of Auricular Confession, which is a very dangerous feature of the system, perhaps its most dangerous feature, because such a recurrence must in some measure keep the soul in its inmost resorts and confidences hanging upon man

instead of God, and make its piety a hot-house plant, weak and sickly, not manly and vigorous,—where is such a practice even hinted at in the Prayer Book? There is not the faintest indication in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick that the special Confession, which the patient is to be moved to make, has been, or ought to have been, the regular practice of his life hitherto. And in the Communion Service we find no sort of intimation that the coming to the discreet and learned Minister is to be resorted to as a normal practice of the spiritual life. It is merely a remedial measure, recommended by way of meeting a temporary emergency. And let me add that this temporary emergency is not stated to be sin (though of course it may involve more or less of that), but the incapacity of a person, assumed to be well-disposed in the main, to quiet his own conscience. Scruples and doubtfulness of conscience are spiritual weaknesses and infirmities rather than sins. And cases are not unfrequent of sensitive and susceptible minds, which are very much harassed by them in early life, but which, when the mental constitution becomes more robust, succeed in throwing them off.

(3.) Lastly, as to *formality*. A form of Absolution is provided in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick, and it is prescribed that “the Priest shall absolve” the sick person “after this sort,” which, if we look to the Latin original of that Rubric, “*hoc modo dicens*,” probably means in those words,—after that particular form. But it is material to observe that, while a Form is provided for Absolution, none is provided for the special Confession. The penitent is left to make it in his own words, and as his own mind on the spur of the moment suggests. I have never seen this circumstance noticed as indicative of the Church’s mind; but to me it seems that there is great significance in it. Absolution is doubtless an ordinance of God. It is unquestionable that our Blessed Lord did lodge in the hands of His Apostles a power (explain it how you like,—the explanation is no part of my present subject) of remitting sins; unquestionable also that St. Paul

exerted this power toward the incestuous Corinthian on the sincere repentance of that offender; and, as the exercise of this power is certainly not less needed in the present circumstances of the Church than it was under the administration of the Apostles, we may safely conclude that this power has descended to the modern Church, floating down the stream of time in the safe ark of the original ministerial Commission; "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them . . . and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Our Church of England, in common, I believe, with all orthodox Churches throughout the world, most distinctly recognises the existence of such a power. Whatever its exact nature<sup>3</sup> and limits may be, it is a power communicated at the Ordination of Priests, and exercised as often as the Priest says Morning and Evening Prayer, or celebrates the holy Communion. And in order to its various exercises, forms of Absolution are provided, the form betokening Absolution to be an ordinance of God, and to be recognised by the Church as such.—But while Absolution is an ordinance of God, there is not a word in holy Scripture to indicate that private Confession is. It is enjoined certainly by St. James that the sick Christian shall send for the elders of the Church, and that they shall pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord; and it is promised that the prayer of faith shall be to him the instrument both of natural and spiritual healing; "and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him;" from all which we are doubtless at liberty to say that the pastoral visitation of the sick is an Apostolic ordinance, and should be recognised and

<sup>3</sup> The writer has endeavoured to exhibit its nature and limits in a popular form in Chapters IV. and V. of Part III. of his "Office of the Holy Communion," to which the present Chapters are designed as an Appendix. It is his desire, when time can be found for it, to put forth a translation of Barrow's treatise "De potestate clavium,"—a noble dissertation, exhaustive of its subject.



practised in the modern Church, (dropping only that part of it, which had reference to a state of things now no longer existing, when the miraculous gift of healing existed in the Church). And it is true also that the notice of this ordinance is immediately followed by the words ; “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.” And it is *probable* that the connexion of thought between these words and the preceding is, that the sick person would very naturally, if he felt his conscience burdened with any weighty matter, take the opportunity of disclosing it to those sympathising friends who stood around his bed (particularly to the elders, as representing the Church), and of soliciting their prayers on his behalf. But surely by no means, short of extremely unfair violence done to the passage, can it be made out that here Confession of sins to a Priest is recognised as an ordinance of God, or made an institution in the Church of Christ. St. James does not even mention Confession, before he has (if I may so say) done with the ordinance of the Visitation of the Sick ; and, when he does mention it, he almost pointedly refuses to recognise anything of an official or formal character in it ; “Confess your faults,” says he,—not to the presbyters, though it was quite obvious to say so, if he had meant that, but—“one to another.”

The same absolute silence as to the form in which a special Confession is to be made, which we observe in the Visitation Service, is observable also in the Communion Service. No form whatever is provided, in which the grief of the soul that is troubled with scruple and doubtfulness is to be opened to the discreet and learned minister of God’s Word, nor is it intimated that any form at all shall be used. The benefit of Absolution is indeed spoken of as that which, *in addition to ghostly counsel and advice*, the troubled and perplexed conscience may hope to carry away ; but there is no direction for, nor even any suggestion of, a form in which the Absolution is to be given. If I may venture an opinion, at issue with that of authorities

which I greatly respect,<sup>4</sup> I should imagine that the Absolution in question is not *necessarily* to be given in set form at all. Let it be considered that it is called not absolution simply, but “absolution by the ministry of God’s holy Word,” and that the absolution of the Word and of doctrine was one of the five species of Absolution recognised by the old Fathers as dispensed

<sup>4</sup> My friend, Mr. Scudamore, whose profound learning on this particular subject, as well as his sincere attachment to the *Reformed* Church of England, gives him every right to be listened to, demurs to my position that Absolution (proper) can be ministered except in a set form, and has favoured me with an interesting letter on the subject. He refers to Bingham’s opinion in the Sermons on Absolution appended to Book XIX. of his “Antiquities,” as supporting his view. But Bingham, it appears to me, does not put out of court an informal private Absolution by means of preaching to the individual. He says that “the declaratory absolution of the word and doctrine . . . consists in publishing the terms and conditions upon which the Gospel promises pardon and remission of sins.” This is *its constituent*, its essence. Might not this be done informally? He does not however dwell at all upon the informal doing of it, but goes on to say that this species of Absolution is “either general or particular: the general absolution is such as our church appoints every minister to pronounce after the general confession of sins in her daily service. . . . But besides this . . . there is a more particular absolution appointed to be given to single persons in some special cases; that is, when men labour under troubles of mind and disquiet of conscience for any particular sins, which they make confession of to a minister, with proper signs of a genuine repentance. In that case the minister is authorized, not only to give them ghostly counsel and advice, but also the benefit of absolution; that is, if, upon a just examination of their case, he judges them to be real penitents before God, then he may not only declare to them the general promises of pardon, but assure them in particular, that, as far as he can judge of their case by the visible tokens and indications of their repentance, he esteems them absolved before God, and accordingly declares and pronounces to them their absolution.” But (not at all questioning that this might be done formally) might it not also be done *informally*? To the writer it seems that both the informal and formal announcement of the minister’s judgment are intended to be embraced in the words of the Exhortation above quoted. The penitent “requireth . . . (1) comfort or (2) counsel” (two things, I admit, not one) more than his own mind can supply him with. He is exhorted to come to the Minister, “that by the ministry of God’s holy

by the Church.<sup>5</sup> *The first of these* was the great forgiveness of sins dispensed in Baptism to those who receive that Sacrament in penitence and faith, and never, where Baptism may be had, dispensed without it, according to that word of Ananias to St. Paul; "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." *The second* was the absolution of the Eucharist, in which remission of sins and all other benefits of Christ's passion are conveyed to those who communicate with penitence, faith, and love. *The third* was Absolution by imposition of hands (a very ancient form of giving it) and prayer or intercession. Our own Church in the Communion

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Word he may receive the benefit of absolution" (and thereby "comfort" and "quieting of his conscience"), "together with" —the other thing he may stand in need of—"ghostly counsel and advice," and thereby, "the avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness."—But cannot "comfort" and "quieting of the conscience" be had by an informal announcement of pardon, which the heart is opened by God's Spirit to receive? *Are they never had from a public Sermon? And if so, why may they not be had from a private one?* If the composer of the Exhortation intended nothing but a formal Absolution, does it not require to be accounted for that he has indicated no form in which it is to be given? It is not necessary to suppose that he intended to exclude a form, where such might be humbly and heartily desired, and made matter of special request by the penitent. The words of the Prayer Book, like those of Holy Scripture, are most correctly understood, when understood in their broadest sense. I am not ignorant that the recital of a formula in accordance with God's holy Word may be called "the ministry of God's holy Word," as the Baptismal formula is very probably called so in Ephesians v. 26 and in 1 Peter i. 23 (though surely here we should not be right in *excluding* the effect of the preached Word upon the heart and conscience of an adult catechumen). But, in view of the composer's having indicated no form, is it fair or reasonable to say that he recognises no informal Absolution, but prescribes exclusively a formal one?

Such is my apology for not subscribing entirely to the view of one, whose researches on such a subject must necessarily give to his opinion a far greater weight than can attach to my own.

<sup>5</sup> See these enumerated and fully explained by Bingham ("Antiquities of the Christian Church," Book xix. chap. i. and ii.).

Service recognises this Absolution by means of intercession, a beautiful precatory form of Absolution occurring after the general Confession. *The fourth* was that of the relaxation of Church censures. It had reference to the system of discipline alluded to in the opening address of the Communion Service, by which such persons as stood convicted of notorious sin were put to open penance and punished in this world. When they had duly completed their penance, they were solemnly restored by this kind of Absolution to the peace and full communion of the Church. *The fifth* was the absolution of the Word and doctrine,—a declaration in God's Name of the terms on which He will forgive and accept sinners for Christ's sake,—a declaration which of course may be compressed into a very short formulary, as is done in the Absolution of our daily Service, but which may also be expanded into a short sermon, making reference to the gracious invitations so abundantly issued to repentant sinners in the Gospel. Many and many a time has a sermon on the fulness and freeness of Gospel offers, and the rich abundance of mercy and grace bestowed upon every sinner on the instant of his coming to Christ, quickened and brightened, as with a ray of warm golden sunlight, the overcast, overclouded, desponding conscience. And of course it is open to a minister to urge in his study upon a single soul, with a special reference to that soul's special needs, the same things which he habitually urges from the pulpit. And I respectfully submit that this, equally well with the reading of a stated form over a kneeling penitent, would meet the requirements of the phrase "absolution by the ministry of God's holy Word." The minister is to point the troubled and disquieted conscience to the blood of Christ and the promises of the Gospel, and to say with John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." And the penitent, catching a glimpse of this Lamb of God by faith, will take heart again, and (like the Ethiopian after his interview with St. Philip) go on his way rejoicing, having received

“the benefit of absolution by the ministry of God’s holy Word.”

And most wise, considerate, and loving is this provision, which our Church has made for consciences either burdened or perplexed, or both,—a provision which we rejoice to have in our Prayer Book, and the withdrawal of which we should feel to be a very serious flaw,—a provision which it is much to be wished that many more persons would avail themselves of, as we are assured that it would greatly conduce to edification.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> We extract from Jeremy Taylor’s masterly Section on “the imposing Auricular Confession upon Consciences, without authority from God” (Dissuasive from Popery, Part II. pp. 249-295, 4to, London, 1667) the following passage in favour of private Confession, when *not* made obligatory upon consciences:—

“Whether to confess to a Priest be an advisable discipline, and a good instance, instrument, and ministry of repentance, and may serve many good ends in the Church, and to the souls of needing persons, is no part of the question. We find that in the Acts of the Apostles, divers converted persons came to St. Paul, either publicly or privately, and confessed their deeds; and burnt their books of exorcism, that is, did what became severe and hearty penitents who needed counsel and comfort, and that their repentance should be conducted by wise guides. And when St. James exhorts all Christians ‘to confess their sins to one another,’ certainly it is more agreeable to all spiritual ends, that this be done rather to the curates of souls, than to the ordinary brethren. The Church of England is no way engaged against it, but advises it, and practises it. The Calvinist Churches do not practise it much, because they know not well how to divest it from its evil appendages which are put to it by the customs of the world, and to which it is too much exposed by the interests, weaknesses, and partialities of men. But they commending it, show they would use it willingly, if they could order it unto edification. *Interim quin sistant se pastores, quoties sacram Cœnam participare volunt, adeo non reclamo, ut maxime velim hoc ubique observari.*<sup>1</sup> And for the Lutheran Churches, that it is their practice, we may see it in Chemnitius, who was one of the greatest fame amongst them, and he is noted to this purpose by Bellarmine; only they all consent, that it is not necessary nor of divine institution; and being but of man’s invention, it ought not to pass into a doctrine; and, as the Apostles said in the matter of circumcision, ‘a burden ought not to be put upon the necks of the disciples;’ and that, *in lege gratiæ, longe difficillimum* too, as Major observes truly,

<sup>1</sup> Calvin’s Institutes, Lib. iii. cap. 4, sect. 12, 13, b. 2.

But to regard secret Confession to a Priest as a Divine Institution, obligatory upon men's consciences, or even to make it a chronic devotional exercise, under the impression that it is very healthful to the soul, and a condition of profitable communion, this is a thing so totally different in kind from what the Prayer Book and our best divines do recommend, that it is hard to see how the attempt to confound the two things is otherwise than disingenuous and dishonest.

It is not very difficult to trace the mental process by which Auricular Confession found acceptance with Christians, gradually crept into their practice, and was at length made obligatory in the thirteenth century by the fourth Lateran Council. The same mental process no doubt (for the line of reasoning taken by the human mind is much the same in all ages) is operating to revive in our own Church a practice which our Reformers studiously eschewed, and to which, as has been shown, the Prayer Book lends no sort of sanction. Though the conclusion is most erroneous and most mischievous, some of the sentiments and instincts which lead to it are true, and good, and deserving of all respect and sympathy. First, it is felt that sin in professing Christians is (as indeed it is) a very grave and serious thing, pregnant with the most awful consequences. Time was when this was fully recognised in the Church; and it is the time alluded to in the opening of the Communion Service, when there existed a public penitential discipline, and "such persons as stood convicted of notorious sin were put to open penance, and punished in this world, that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord." When this system of public penance was, from certain abuses and disorders consequent upon it, broken up, it

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by far greater than any burden in the law of grace, the time of the Gospel. Let it be commended to all, to whom it is needful or profitable; but let it be free, as to the conscience precisely, and bound but by the cords of a man, and as other Ecclesiastical Laws are, which are capable of exceptions, restrictions, cautions, dispensations, rescindings, and abolitions by the same authority, or upon greater reasons."

was felt that something compensating was required—that the strait gate would be made wider, and the narrow way broader, than holy Scripture represents it, unless some very stern and stringent protest was made by the Church against allowed sin within her own pale. It was thought that she would hold out her privileges and blessings at too cheap a rate, unless something of this sort were done; and it was under this feeling that the Communion Service was drawn up, and inserted in the Reformed Prayer Book, as a sort of substitute, feeble indeed, but such as the times and the state of society admitted of, for the ancient discipline.—Then again, operating in the same direction, there is that true and unquenchable instinct of man's heart, which may almost be called the voice of the Holy Ghost in our fallen nature, that a hypocrite can never be accepted with God till he ceases to be a hypocrite, that one who wears the sheep's clothing of a Christian profession, while conscious of some hidden iniquity which makes him really a wolf, can never be at one with Him who is the Truth, until he finds the moral courage to throw off the fleece, and let himself be seen by men in his true colours.—And then, thirdly, it is felt, and felt most justly, that all real Christians must be living by rule, with self-discipline and self-restraint, and that the easy-going self-indulgent life of the great mass of those who profess and call themselves Christians, who do not make a conscience of using their time profitably, or of governing their tongues and their tempers, is not the life of Christ's faithful soldiers and servants, who fight manfully under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil.

All the above sentiments are perfectly wholesome and just. But then comes the leap from these to the mischievous and erroneous conclusion. As Christians ought to be living by rule and under discipline,—as the ancient discipline of public penance is dropped, and the state of the Church and the times makes it impossible of revival,—can we not invent a wholesome system of discipline of our own, and bring every soul

into subjection to it, and make it obligatory upon every conscience? The command to approach the Lord's Table habitually, and to make there the solemn memorial of His death, together with the power of Absolution vested in the Christian Ministry, furnish us with an excellent platform on which to construct such a system. Let us arise and build. Let us rule that, in order to carry away any blessing from the holy Communion, private Absolution bestowed upon the individual must be first had from a Priest. Let us rule further that, in order to a private Absolution, there must be (what certainly "matches" to perfection) a private Confession. Let us decree that this Confession, in order to be valid (*i.e.* in order to secure Absolution), must be full and perfect—that the penitent must confess every sin, with all its aggravations, so far as he can remember, and must not omit to ransack every hole and corner of his memory; for that omission shall invalidate the Confession, and nullify the Absolution. And where the Priest doubts whether the penitent is explicit enough, or suspects that he is evasive, he shall be directed by questioning—and that even on such subjects as the Apostle says "it is a shame even to speak of"—to drag forth into the light of day the lurking iniquity. And having done this, the Priest shall appoint to the penitent such penance as he shall think fit,—that is, shall bind him to use certain *extra* devotions, very much as a schoolmaster sets a boy an imposition for some fault of conduct. And then the Priest shall absolve him, not in that vague and general style in which Absolution is continually ministered in our Churches, but in the singular number—absolve him before the penance is done (lest he should die meanwhile), but yet always on the condition and understanding that it must be done, if the penitent lives, and that, if it is not done, the absolution does not take effect. Does not all this look wholesome and profitable, on the first blush, and just as if it would bring ordinary Christians, as they so much require to be brought, under rule and discipline, and thus supply



a great desideratum in the system of the modern Church? It may perhaps seem so. But for all its seeming it is wrong in principle, and for that reason, when worked out, has been found to be fatally mischievous in results. It is wrong in principle, and has a fundamental flaw in it, because it is solemnly said in God's Law; "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: THOU SHALT NOT ADD THERETO, nor diminish from it;" and this whole system of Auricular Confession and Penance is plainly an addition to God's Word; it is a teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. The utter and absolute silence of God's Word upon any such system as that now described is itself the most eloquent condemnation of it. We need say no more than this in repudiating it;—"I look into my Bible, and I do not find it there." For, powerful as must be the leverage of such a system upon the human conscience,—affecting deeply the condition of the souls submitted to it, as it *must* affect them (for such a practice never can be morally indifferent),—*would it not be found in the Bible, if the leverage were for good, if the system were really salutary?* What! shall Auricular Confession be (as some, even in our own Church, pretend) a practice essential to our spiritual health and well-being, a practice without which we cannot long keep straight or go on right,—and shall we suppose that the wise and tender Father, who loved us so affectionately as to give His Son for us, the Good Shepherd, who gave His life and shed His blood for the sheep, and watches over them with a solicitude of which the strongest parental anxiety for a child is very dim and poor figure,—the holy Comforter, who in the sacred Word hath revealed to us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, and surely hath kept back nothing that was profitable to us,—have not made it known to us for our guidance and our good, have left for the discovery of man a beneficial and salutary practice of devotion, and which was certainly never recognised as obligatory by the Christian Church for the first ten centuries of her existence? It is incon-

ceivable. The very supposition is an impeachment of God's care, of Christ's love, of the Spirit's wisdom.

Young men and young women, beware of this yoke which it is sought to impose upon you, however specious the arguments by which it is recommended, and however devout, able, and learned the advocates may be, who would persuade you to submit to it. It is one thing, when in any special trouble or entanglement of conscience, when wanting sympathy and counsel to aid and animate you in your struggle against warring lusts, to resort to some discreet and learned minister, and to solicit at his hands advice, consolation, prayers for you and with you, and the relief of your conscience by the absolution of the Word and doctrine. Act thus by all means; I do thoroughly believe that by acting thus (and specially by young men acting thus) many a temptation might be avoided, many a sin nipped in the bud, many a sore healed, many a heartache saved. But when private formal Confession to the priest is pressed upon you as a divine ordinance, as a normal practice of the spiritual life, and an essential preliminary to a profitable Communion, then say with the Shunammite's husband; "Wherefore should I go to him to-day," when there is no ordinance to be administered by him, no ecclesiastical function to be discharged, when "it is neither new moon nor sabbath?" Ah! wherefore indeed? Is not the High Priest, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, tenderer, wiser, more loving than any human priest can be? If by His constantly accruing mercy and grace you are enabled in some good measure to discipline yourself, and are gaining a growing control over evil tempers and appetites, is not this walking alone better ten thousand times than walking on crutches? "Wherefore wouldst thou go to him to-day" then? Is it because thou wouldst have the benefit and relief of ministerial Absolution? Verily, your Church does not stint you of it; it is to be had every "new moon and sabbath," nay, every day of the year in Churches where the daily Office is said. Do not morbidly crave for any

more individual absolution than is there offered. Remember that the Gospel is preached by the Lord's ordinance in general terms—to "all nations"—"to every creature,"—and that it is the part of faith to take to itself those general offers, and to say, "God makes them to me." So with the message of mercy through Christ, on the terms of repentance and faith, which is summarized in the Absolution of the daily Service. So with the Absolution of prayer in the Communion Service. It is dispensed *generally*, and our part is to claim our share in it by faith. Like new-minted gold pieces, thrown abroad among the people as a royal largess at a Coronation, of which a man eagerly catches one, and folds it in his robe, and treasures it up as a memorial of the Sovereign's bounty, so the absolutions and blessings of the Church are scattered abroad in God's ordinances promiscuously, and a fervent faith reaches forth its hand with joy, and appropriates what it needs. If then thou art conscious of sin, and wouldst have Absolution, come into the Church. Confess yourself as to that particular in the general Confession to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life. Remember that the true Scapegoat, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world, is in the midst of the two or three gathered together in His Name. Confess thy sins, as it were, over Him, laying the sin upon His devoted head, that He may bear it away. Then listen intently, devoutly, believingly, to the announcement of pardon, or to the prayer for pardon, which His authorized minister makes over thee in His Name. Take it to thy bosom, hide it in the folds of thy heart—that pardon—it is *thine*; *as much designed for thee, as if there were none others kneeling at thy side to share it with thee.* And thou shalt arise with a brightened conscience and a relieved heart, as an overcast sky is brightened, and a leaden landscape relieved, by "clear shining after rain."

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## CHAPTER V

## THE DOCTRINE OF SACRIFICE

“Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.”—MAL. i. 7

IT is often asked by those who deny altogether the sacrificial character of the holy Communion, whether the holy Table, at which the Supper of the Lord is celebrated, is ever called an altar in holy Scripture. Many eminent divines of the Reformed Church believe that it is so called in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the writer says; “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” Richard Baxter<sup>1</sup> will hardly be charged with Popery. Yet he tells us in his “Christian Institutes” that “as the bread” [of the Communion] “is justly called *Christ’s body*, as signifying it, so the action described” [meaning the Eucharistic action] “was of old called a *sacrifice*, as representing and commemorating it. . . . And the naming of the table an altar, as related to this representative sacrifice, is no more improper than the other. ‘We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat’ (Heb. xiii. 10), seems plainly to mean the *sacramental communion*.”

<sup>1</sup> It is well known that Baxter objected to subscription, to the use of the cross in Baptism, and the promiscuous giving of the Lord’s Supper; that he was chaplain to Colonel Whalley’s regiment in the Parliamentary army; that at the Savoy Conference he drew up a reformed Liturgy, to supersede the existing one; and that on the passing of the Uniformity Act he left the ministry of the Church of England. All the tendencies of his mind were against the theology represented by the Church of Rome; but he was a man of eminent candour, as well as of the highest character, and nothing would ever induce him to strain a passage of holy Scripture on a Procrustean bed of preconceived views. The passage here referred to will be found in his “Christian Institutes,” i. p. 304.

But even waiving this interpretation of the passage in the Hebrews, as being one which all commentators do not accept, and allowing for argument's sake that no passage of holy Scripture can be produced in which the Lord's Table is unequivocally called an altar, there can be no manner of doubt that the converse is the case,—that the Altar of Burnt-Offering of the Jewish ritual is called “the table of the Lord.” It is so in the passage which stands at the head of this Chapter. Almighty God in that passage is reproaching the priests of the second temple for their unworthy conduct in presenting on His altar for sacrifice refuse animals: “If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.” These blind, lame, and weakly victims are the “polluted bread” of verse 7. “Bread,” though a very literal, is not altogether a happy translation. “Food” is the correct word, and the word which is actually employed to render this same Hebrew word in Leviticus iii. 11, where the parts of the peace-offering which are directed to be burned upon the altar,—the fat and the kidneys and the caul,—are called “the food of the offering” (literally, the bread of the offering) “made by fire unto the Lord.” So here in Malachi the word should be, “Ye offer polluted *food* upon my altar,” the food being animal sacrifices, which had some blemish in them. The idea involved in the passage is one common to heathenism, as well as Judaism, that the God, who is the object of men's worship, himself partakes of the food which is offered upon his altar, and consumed by the sacred fire that burns thereon. In accordance with this idea, the word “altar” is exchanged for a phrase, which more clearly indicates Jehovah's participation in what is offered to Him; it is called the “table of the Lord.” St. Paul did not originate that expression. He found it in the inspired Scriptures of the Old Testament. The altar of burnt-offering had been called “the table of the Lord” by Malachi, just as by Ezekiel

(ch. xli. 22) the altar of incense had been called "the table that is before the Lord." And himself speaking by the Spirit of God, he applied it to the table at which among Christians the holy Supper is celebrated. "Ye cannot," he says, "be partaker of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."

Thus a name, originally belonging to the Jewish altar, is borrowed by the Apostle to designate a Christian board of Communion. This would be surely rather a hazardous mode of proceeding, and one which might lead to erroneous inferences, if in no sense whatever the board of Communion were an altar. If the whole Jewish sacrificial system was intended by the Apostles to be swept away, and a system of worship wholly and utterly new, having no roots in the past, and with the sacrificial element eliminated from it altogether, was to be substituted (as some pretend), one fails to understand this borrowing of phraseology from one system and applying it freely to another. It would surely hazard a mistake. The sameness of phraseology would be taken to indicate a subsisting thread of connexion between the old and the new system, for which there was no ground in truth and fact.

If it be maintained that at all events the term "altar" is nowhere in the Book of Common Prayer applied to the Lord's table, that is no doubt a fact, but like other facts of the Prayer Book, on one of which some observations were offered in the second Chapter of this Appendix, it is a fact which can be rightly understood only in connexion with the whole history of the Book. The Book was originally drawn up to guide the public devotions of English Churchmen, at a period when the Church was just emerging from the superstitions and corruptions of Romanism. The intention of the Reformers, and it is an intention for which their memory is to be blessed and venerated, was to cut the Church entirely clear from these superstitions and corruptions. In perfect consistency with Scripture and Primitive Antiquity they might have left many things standing, which yet it was judicious and politic,

—aye, and essential to the safety of the Church,—to remove. There were many things lawful, which yet were not expedient. More particularly such horrible perversions of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper had grown up around the ordinance in the course of centuries, that it was necessary to proceed with the extremest caution in every item of the arrangements and the phraseology connected with it. The minds of the people had grown to the idea that in the Mass "the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt." From this idea they had to be entirely wrenched away. This could not be done effectually without some little violence; a crooked stick can only be made straight by giving it a strong bend in another direction. The Reformers were afraid, —most justly afraid, under their circumstances,—of the word "altar." For the word "Lord's table" they had express New Testament sanction; for the word "altar," as applied to the Communion Table, they had only one (or at most two) New Testament passages, which could be quoted as sanctioning it, and both these were capable of different explanations. It was deemed safe therefore, in the then exigencies of the Church, to waive the term, though it never can be fairly gathered from hence that there is not a true, and Scriptural, and orthodox sense, in which the Lord's table may be called an altar, and is so called by many of the early Fathers. But the Church is no more in the condition in which the Reformers had to deal with and guide her,—no longer engaged in the hard struggle to extricate herself from an old bondage, or passing through the critical birth-throes of a new life. And accordingly we are now at liberty to vindicate, as Scriptural and primitive, terms and modes of expression, which the Reformers may have thought it safe and wise to drop for a while. The question about images in Churches offers a parallel to that which we are discussing. When the people had to be broken of the habit of worshipping images, and regarding them with religious veneration, it was necessary to decree with great sternness the destruction

of those which existed, and to prohibit under very stringent penalties the erection of others. But at a period, when image-worship has (at all events in our Communion) lost its hold upon the minds of men, and statuary in our Churches is regarded merely as one of several forms of Art, which men seek to lay as a tribute at the feet of the Redeemer, for the decoration of His house of prayer, just then to seek to revive a penal statute against images, which had great significance and value at the period of its enactment, this savours of an acrid and narrow Puritanism, rather than of that lofty zeal for righteousness and truth, which doubtless animated the original framers of such enactments.

But, although the Book of Common Prayer does not admit the word "altar," it does expressly and unequivocally apply the word "sacrifice" to the Eucharistic action. The administration and reception of the holy Supper being over, certain concluding devotions are recited, consisting of the Lord's Prayer, one of two Post-Communion Prayers (the option between which is given), the Hymn *Gloria in Excelsis*, and the Benediction. The first of these Post-Communion Prayers begins thus; "O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this *our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.*" And immediately after these words another mention is made of "sacrifice" as being then and there offered. "And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a *reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee.*" It will, I think, be useful,—and certainly will fall in with the line of thought, which we have just opened, if in this and the following Chapter we give a very short summary, first, of the true doctrine of Sacrifice, and then of the senses in which there is a sacrifice in the Eucharist, and in which the Eucharist is a sacrifice.

I. What then, in the first place, is the true idea of Sacrifice? I answer,—“Man rendering unto God something which is well-pleasing unto Him,”—no definition



narrower than that will exhaust the idea. It is a very common (but very crude) notion, that all sacrifice is of a propitiatory character, and directed to the expiation of sin. Those who have studied the various offerings prescribed by the Levitical law will take a larger view of the subject. They know that, although the law prescribed sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, the characteristic idea of which *was* expiation, yet that it prescribed also other varieties, burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, peace-offerings. In short, as we have already seen in Chapter III. of this Appendix, there were three distinct ideas attaching to the three great classes of offerings, the Burnt-Offering, the Peace-Offering, and the Sin-Offering. The first was that of self-dedication;—man offering to God the acceptable sacrifice of himself, his soul, his body, and all that is his. This was the idea of the Burnt-Offering. The second was the idea of thanksgiving;—man offering to God the acceptable sacrifice of a grateful acknowledgment, in return for His mercies. This was the idea of the Peace-Offering. The third was the idea of expiation;—man offering to God an atonement for sin, an acceptable sacrifice to the justice and holiness of God, as the two former were acceptable to His love in Creation and His love in Providence.

The summary idea of Sacrifice, then, is man offering to God something acceptable to Him, in the way either of self-dedication, or grateful acknowledgment, or finally of expiation.

But now arises the all-important question, “How can man do perfectly, and in an acceptable manner, any one of these three things?” God’s demand of them since He is our Creator, constant Benefactor, Lawgiver, and Moral Governor, is, and must be admitted by every conscience to be, most reasonable. But was ever one found among the sons of men, who did or could comply with the demand? Never among those born under the ruins of the Fall. The Fall brought into our nature a great flaw, which utterly invalidates all that man can do in endeavouring to comply with any

one of God's demands. It makes his self-dedication wanting in heartiness, in thoroughness, in fervour; it is not, as it must be, to be acceptable on its own ground, "with all the heart, with all the mind, with all the soul, and with all the strength." It makes his acknowledgments languid and tepid,—who can throw into his thanksgivings to God all the warmth and glow of gratitude which the case deserves? It makes his attempts to atone for past transgressions utterly vain and fruitless, where they are not profane, partly because the man, being still inherently a sinner, is always contracting a fresh debt while he seeks to pay off the old one, partly because there is not value enough in a vitiated victim to make a worthy expiation, and because to suppose that God can be bought off by gifts and bribes (like an unjust judge) to let sin go unpunished, is, in the very offering we make to Him, to insult Him to His face. In short, the Fall, incapacitating man as it does for perfection, has made every offering, which he lays upon God's altar, if judged in itself and by itself, "polluted bread." God, in virtue of the purity of His nature, cannot accept that which is polluted; and man is polluted through and through, in every department of his complex being—in spirit, soul, and body—by sin.

What needs to be done, then, on man's behalf? We all of us know what *has* been done. God sent His Son into the world, to be born of a pure Virgin, and so to take upon Him a pure and untainted human nature, in which, as the sun is reflected in the pure dewdrop, and all the glories of the prismatic colours displayed, might be manifested all the perfections of the Only Begotten of the Father. He, and He alone, of all that ever lived, rendered to God every sacrifice which can be demanded from man. His self-dedication was absolutely perfect, and therefore absolutely acceptable. Hear Him making the vow of self-dedication, when He says, on coming into the world; "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." He gave Himself up to God,—His heart all aflame with love and zeal,—and

thus offered the Burnt-Offering. He gave Himself up to men, to teach them, to labour for them, to bleed, to agonize on their behalf, and thus offered the<sup>2</sup> Meat Offering. Amid all His labours for man, and His buffetings and contradictions from man, He was continually lifting His eyes to Heaven, and blessing His Father for all His dispensations. "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee," was one of His purposes foreannounced before His Incarnation, fulfilled in His life on earth, and even now in course of fulfilment. And thus He offered the Peace-Offering<sup>3</sup> for thanksgiving. Finally, He was

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Andrew Jukes, commenting on the difference between the Burnt-Offering (in which *a life* was offered) and the Meat-Offering, which consisted of vegetable substances (flour, oil, frankincense), says; "Life is that which from the beginning God claimed as His part in creation; as an emblem, therefore, it represents what the creature owes to God. Corn, the fruit of the earth, on the other hand, is man's part in creation; as such, it stands the emblem of man's claim, or of what we owe to man. What we owe to God or to man is respectively our duty to either. Thus in the Burnt-Offering the surrender of life to God represents the fulfilment of man's duty to God; man yielding to God His portion to satisfy all His claim. In the Meat-Offering the gift of corn and oil represents the fulfilment of man's duty to his neighbour; man in his offering surrendering himself to God, but doing so that he may give to man his portion. Thus the Burnt-Offering is the perfect fulfilment of the laws of the first table; the Meat-Offering the perfect fulfilment of the second,' etc. etc. ("The Law of the Offerings, considered as the appointed figure of the various aspects of the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ," Nisbet & Co. 1848, 2d ed. p. 91.)

<sup>3</sup> The Thank-Offering was a variety of the Peace-Offering (see Lev. vii. 11, 22). But the Peace-Offering in its every variety had the thought of grateful acknowledgment in it. It might be "a vow," fulfilled upon certain blessings being conferred, which had been urgently solicited. Here there is the additional idea of the fulfilment of a sacred promise; but still the thought of grateful acknowledgment is not merged. Or it might be a "voluntary offering." The prominent idea here would be that of willingness,—the giving "cheerfully," and "according as" the offerer "is disposed in his heart." But the ground in the heart, from which such "a willing offering" springs, must surely be a feeling of gratitude (see Lev. vii. 12, 16; and 2 Cor. viii. 12; ix. 7).

implicated, as having made Himself one with us (not indeed in sin, but) in sin's worst and heaviest penal consequences. The second Man, the Lord from Heaven, died under a cloud, to expiate the sins and shortcomings of the first. Not only was the form of physical death, which He underwent, most cruel and most ignominious, but some mysterious anguish, which, partly from that familiarity with sin which so blunts our sensibilities to it, partly from the circumstance that the relations of sin are beyond the reach of our faculties, pressed down His human soul in the last hour, and seemed to shut out, what was to Him the last ray of comfort and hope, the light of His Father's countenance. And thus He offered the sin and trespass<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Most interesting and instructive is Mr. Jukes's Chapter on the Sin-Offering ("Law of the Offerings," pp. 161-202). He points out "the reason why before the Law there were neither Sin nor Trespass Offerings. We read indeed of Burnt-Offerings and Meat-Offerings being offered by many of the early patriarchs; but they are never recorded to have offered Sin-Offerings, for 'where there is no law there is no transgression.' 'By the law,' says the Apostle, 'is the knowledge of sin,' and again, '*sin is not imputed* where there is no law.' It was the Law which convicted man of sin, and made it necessary that he should have a Sin-Offering." Again he points out the significance of the Sin-Offering being *not* "of a sweet savour," as the Burnt-Offering was. "The sweet savour Offerings were *for acceptance*; the others *for expiation*. . . . In the one case the Offering was accepted to show that the offerer was accepted of the Lord; and the total consumption of the Offering on the altar showed God's acceptance of, and satisfaction in, the offerer. In the other case the Offering was cast out, and burnt, not on God's table, the altar, but in the wilderness without the camp; to show that the offerer in his offering endures the judgment of God, and is cast out of His presence as accursed. . . . The one is,—'He gave himself for us, as an offering to God of a sweet smelling savour.' The other,—'He gave himself for our sins;' 'He was made sin for us who knew no sin.'" And as to the distinction (merely specific, not generic) between the Sin and the Trespass Offering; "The one is for sin in our nature, the other for the fruits of it. . . . In the Sin-Offering *no particular act* of sin is mentioned, but *a certain person* is seen standing confessedly as a sinner; in the Trespass-Offering *certain acts* are enumerated, and *the person* never appears." But the whole Chapter is replete with interest-

offerings. All this He hath done already.—And now what does He? He has passed upwards into the heavenly temple, not made with hands, and has become, as the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses it, “a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” If He be “a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle,” He must have a ministration to fulfil, priestly functions to discharge. What are they? It is absolutely necessary to right apprehensions of the subject that we should seize this point.

What does He, as regards His Sin-Offering? It was completed and over, when He cried upon the Cross; “It is finished.” Even He cannot make the offering over again, cannot repeat it; for it is written that He “offered one sacrifice for sins for ever.” But though it cannot be made a second time, it can be pleaded. And this is what He does with it now; having made it, He pleads it. In gracious accents He appeals to it on behalf of transgressors, and implores, asks, claims as of right, that the great appeal may be heard for every penitent and believing soul. And this intercession is ever going on. Like the sweet bells on the high priest’s garment, which he was bidden, on pain of his life, to cause to tinkle when he went into the holy place, it is never, never silent. “He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

What does He next, as regards His Burnt-Offering and His Meat-Offering? These too are not to be repeated, do not admit of being made a second time. Christ’s self-devotion, both to the cause of God upon earth, and to the interests of men, was complete as soon as He expired. His life was a grand monument of human obedience and submission, which received its last finishing stroke as He cried, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” But this offering, like

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ing and edifying suggestions; and indeed the whole work should be studied carefully by those who wish to seize the *rationale* of the Levitical Offerings.

the former, though made once for all, may be, and is, pleaded by Him *now*. He asks that it may be remembered on behalf of, and imputed to, His people—that God, regarding them through the medium of Christ, may see Christ's righteousness in them, as one who looks at an object through coloured glass sees it of the colour of the glass through which the light passes to his eye.

And now, thirdly, what does He at present, as regards His Thank-Offering? I doubt not that, before it is stated, the thoughtful reader will perceive a difference here. Neither the Sin-Offering nor the Burnt-Offering can be made more than once; but the Thank-Offering admits, by its very nature, of being offered continually—of being protracted through the ages of eternity. The language in which this Peace-Offering, or Thank-Offering, was vowed beforehand, is that already quoted, "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee;" and again, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The meek shall eat" (eat what? eat the "sacrifice of his peace-offerings for thanksgiving," as such sacrifices were prescribed in the law to be eaten, "the same day that it is offered,") "and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever." The words come from the great Psalm of the Crucifixion, the 22nd, and they represent the vows which Christ made upon the cross as to the sacrifice of praise which He would offer in the midst of His brethren, "in the midst of the church" or congregation, if He were saved (as He was) from the lion's mouth, and heard from among the horns of the unicorns. But it must be manifest to every one that the fulfilment of this vow was not confined to the forty days, during which He lingered upon earth after the Resurrection; nay, that it did not then receive its most emphatic and complete fulfilment. No! when the Holy Ghost descended on the day of Pentecost, and constituted the Christian Church, communicating to them Christ's own Presence (for it will be remembered

that He had said ; “ I will not leave you comfortless : I will come to you ”), and establishing in His own Person a living thread of connexion between the Head of the body in heaven and His members upon earth, then were things in a condition for the great “ sacrifice of peace-offerings for thanksgiving,”—a sacrifice to be made in the sanctuary of Heaven by the great Minister of the Sanctuary, the echoes of it being caught up in every Communion Feast (“ this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving ”) which is celebrated in the Church upon earth. But let us not forestall, as to the senses in which the Eucharist is a sacrifice, and in which (not the same, but a distinct assertion) there is a sacrifice in the Eucharist. These require for their full development another Chapter. Suffice it that in the present Chapter one glimpse of the truth on that subject has been opened to the reader.

For the present let us settle it in our minds that there is and can be no true priest, *in the highest sense of that word*, but Christ ; and that there is and can be no other offering but His, (whether of self-dedication, or of expiation, or of thanksgiving,) which is in the least degree acceptable to God independently and on its own ground. None,—whether in Gospel times, or in the times of the Law. We will not run away with the very common, but very shallow and mistaken notion, that the blood of bulls and goats really did something effective towards the putting away of sin, and that the descendants of Aaron offered sacrifices more real and more availing than the Christian Church offers at the present day. This, besides being itself a great mistake, will introduce into the whole subject such confusion of thought, that we shall be quite unable to see our way through it. A Levitical sacrifice was a divine institution, as being prescribed in God’s Law ; and doubtless, to those who took part in it merely on the ground of its being a divine institution, much more to those whose eyes were opened by the Holy Spirit to catch a glimpse of its true significance, (and probably they were more than we think for), it must have been

in its measure a means of grace ; but in itself it was absolutely without efficacy and worthless ; it borrowed all its virtue and value from the Sacrifice of Christ, to which it made, by the manner of its construction, a prospective reference. It was one of the instruments, which it pleased God to make use of, for applying to His people under the Old Covenant the merits of the Sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifices made by the Christian Church under the New Law, though offered under clearer light, and instruments of a much larger grace, are in themselves equally impotent. Make what you will of them, they can never rise higher than divinely-instituted means, whereby the virtue and merit of what Christ did and suffered for us is communicated to the faithful soul. Sacrifices were this in a lower and feebler degree ; Sacraments are this in a higher and fuller degree. The most fundamental difference between the two, (putting aside the difference of their outward form, which after all is NOT fundamental,) is merely this, that the Levitical sacrifice is prospective, the Christian Sacrament retrospective. The one spoke to Hope ; the other speaks to Memory. The slain victim stimulated and nourished devout anticipations ; the broken bread and outpoured wine stimulate and nourish devout recollections. Are not hope and memory great powers ? does not man live by them in the future and in the past ? Well, it pleased God, in constructing ordinances for His Church at various stages of her existence, to lay His consecrating hand upon these powers, and quicken them into active operation. The sacrifices of the Law were to make the one only Sacrifice live in the hopes and desires of the faithful in bygone generations. The Sacraments of the Gospel are to make the same Sacrifice live in the memories of the faithful in the present generation. Both are no doubt much more than this. They are respectively anticipations and commemorations made in the presence, and under the immediate sanction, of the Most High. They have a God-ward and higher aspect of worship, no less than a man-ward and inferior aspect of edification.



They do not preach merely ; they are instruments of impetration, adoration, praise, communion. But the only basis of both is what we have described, the one Offering of Christ in its several aspects. And it is a basis which establishes a real connexion and identity of principle between worship under the Law and worship under the Gospel, between the altar of the old Levitical ritual and the table of the Lord under the new and better Covenant.

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## CHAPTER VI

### *THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE, THE CHRISTIAN PEACE-OFFERING FOR THANKSGIVING*

“ Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets . . . . over the sacrifices of your peace offerings ; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God.”—NUMBERS X. 10

IT is worthy of observation that the Greek word used in St. Luke’s Gospel, when that evangelist rehearses the institution of the Eucharist, and by St. Paul also, when he rehearses the revelation from the Lord with which he had been favoured on the subject, is the same, which in the Greek version of the Old Testament Scriptures, called the Septuagint, is used to denote the “ memorial ” made “ before God,” by blowing the silver trumpets over the sacrifices of peace-offerings. This circumstance suggests a better translation of the words used by our Lord in instituting the Eucharist. “ Do this for the memorial (or commemoration) of me ” would be a better rendering than “ Do this in remembrance,” that is, for a remembrance, “ of me.” There is a not unimportant difference of mean-

ing between, "Do this for a remembrance," and "Do this for the commemoration." While every commemoration is a remembrance, every remembrance is not a commemoration. A commemoration is a solemn and formal act of remembrance, designed not only to keep alive in the individual mind, but to hand down, and preserve to future generations, the memory of an individual or a transaction. It is not a commemoration, but simply a remembrance, when a son, looking upon some token of affection given or bequeathed to him by his father, bethinks him of that father's loving solicitude for him in the period of his childhood. But when it is felt that the founders and benefactors of some great institution ought, as long as it continues, to be enshrined in the memories of those who have an interest in it, and a day and hour is set apart for this purpose, and at the appointed time in the hall of the institution the names of these founders and benefactors are read out, and their services to the institution publicly recited, and then an oration made in their praise,—this is a commemoration,—a solemn formal act, involving no doubt a remembrance, but going much beyond it.<sup>1</sup> The holy Supper of the Lord, while, as one of its effects, it awakens a remembrance of Him in the mind of each of His faithful people, has a wider scope than this;—it is a solemn formal commemoration of His dying love, which hands down the memory of it to the latest generations of the Church,—nay, and more than this, it is a commemoration which appeals effectually to Him, who has said, "Put me in remembrance," no less than to man; it is a memorial before God, no less than in the face of the Church, of the

<sup>1</sup> It may be added that, "Do this for THE commemoration of me," or "for my commemoration" (*εις την ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν*), goes beyond "Do this in remembrance of me." The latter is simply equivalent to "Do this as a remembrance,"—as one out of several (conceivable) methods of calling me to mind. The other indicates that the method designated is *the appointed* method. "Do this for the" (established) "memorial," "for my memorial," (which I instituted, and commanded to be observed).

once offered, never to be repeated, Sacrifice of Christ.

In our last Chapter the doctrine of Sacrifice, as it is exhibited in the Levitical Law, was briefly explained; and it was shown how Christ, while He was upon earth, offered for us the burnt-offering and meat-offering of a devoted life, and then the sin and trespass offering of an expiatory death,—and how He is now (not indeed making these offerings again, but) pleading them before God in our behalf. This is what our High Priest now does in Heaven, the sanctuary above, which as the Holy of Holies was separated from the Holy Place by a veil, is screened off from us, and indeed from all mere creatures of God, being inaccessible doubtless to the highest archangel. He is exalted “far above all principality and power.” “Angels and authorities and powers” are “made subject unto him.” It was also stated that there is one offering which, by the very nature of it, could not be completed while He was upon earth, but admitted, as the burnt-offering and sin-offering did not, of repetition,—and that this was the thank-offering; the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. “In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee,” says He in Psalm xxii. 22 (comp. Hebrews ii. 12), and again (Psalm xxii. 25); “My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.” This is the offering which is at present being offered. Over and above the pleading, in the way of intercession, of the past and finished Burnt-Offering and Sin-Offering, the Intercessor, in His character of risen and glorified Son of Man, is at present giving thanks in the midst of the Church, praising God in the great congregation, paying His vows before them that fear God. Christ, it is to be remembered, is not only High Priest of the sanctuary of Heaven, but also, as He is called by the Apostle to the Hebrews, “a minister of holy things and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man,”—this tabernacle being the Church Universal, which is divided into two great sections, the Church militant

here on earth, and the Church triumphant in Paradise. It is as Minister of the Church,<sup>2</sup> and not as High Priest of the screened sanctuary, that He offers His Peace-Offering for thanksgiving and for the payment of His vows.

But now, having sufficiently studied the principles which underlie the question, let us address ourselves to the solution of it. "In what senses is there a sacrifice in the Eucharist, and in what sense is the Eucharist itself a sacrifice?"

The answer will be best elicited by treating the subject according to those divisions of it, which have been already traced out, and by inquiring—1st, What is done in the Eucharist, as regards Christ's Sin-Offering; 2dly, What is done as regards His Burnt-Offering; and 3dly, What is done as regards His Peace-Offering for thanksgiving and the fulfilment of His vows.

I. What is done in the Eucharist as regards Christ's Sin-Offering? That is done in regard to it, which Christ Himself does in heaven,—it is pleaded before God, and pleaded efficaciously. And observe the method of this Eucharistic pleading. We may plead the Sin-Offering in simple prayer; we do so, as often as we say at the close of our prayers, "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Put into a large paraphrase, this is equivalent to saying, "O God, we are not worthy in ourselves to draw nigh unto thee; much less to solicit any blessing at thy hand; for we are miserable sinners, who have broken thy law; but we look to thee for pardon, acceptance and grace, through him who not only fulfilled the righteousness of the law for us, but also endured its curse upon the tree." Now this same pleading of Christ's Sin-Offering which we make in prayer, we make in the holy Supper, according to His own appointment, by a representative and commemorative action, constructed purposely in such a manner as

<sup>2</sup> See this thought nobly developed in a Sermon by the late Rev. Canon Melvill ("Melvill's Sermons," Vol. I. Sermon II. Rivingtons, 1870).

to show forth His death before God and man. The bread formed of wheat, bruised in the mill in order to be converted into human sustenance (compare the texts, "Bread corn is bruised;" "He was bruised for our iniquities"), is solemnly broken under the eyes of God and man, to represent the fracture of the body of Christ for our sins by the impact of the nails, lance, and thorny crown. The wine, formed of grapes which are trodden in the wine-press (compare, "I have trodden the wine-press alone;" "he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God"), is solemnly poured out to represent that shedding of Christ's blood, without which there could have been no remission. This action, when performed in faith, pleads with God for forgiveness and acceptance, just as, in a lower degree, prayer offered in the faith of Christ's Name pleads with Him. Before dealing with the symbols of bread and wine in the prescribed manner, we rehearse before God, and so put Him in remembrance of the fact that Christ, the gift of His tender mercy to man, "made" upon the cross, "by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world." Thus we plead in the Eucharist the Sin-Offering of Christ, offered once for all. And we plead it effectually, *1st*, because the way in which we plead is the way of His own appointment; *2dly*, because His heavenly Intercession, when He observes us keeping His appointment, lends virtue and gives weight to our pleading. But if it be asked whether in this sense the Eucharist be a sacrifice, it must be answered in strictness of speech, "No. It is not a Sin-Offering itself; but only the commemoration of a Sin-Offering, effective through faith and the virtue of Christ's Intercession."

If it should be asked how God can forget or need to be reminded of anything, seeing His mind is infinite, and consequently there can be with Him no mental perspective,—the remote past and the remote future must be as present to Him as the present,—the only answer is that holy Scripture, which is His written

Word, thus speaks of Him; and that it is a far safer, wiser, and more reverent course to shape our views on the phraseology of His Word, than in the conceit of our natural minds to speculate upon a subject which must be high above out of our reach. What progress towards understanding the thoughts, plans, and reasonings of the human mind could be made, think you, by the most sagacious and intelligent of animals? And must there not be a much wider interval between the highest created mind and the infinite mind of God, than between the intelligence of one creature than another? Suffice it to say that, albeit we cannot conceive in God any sort of mental imperfection, yet that there must be something in Him,—we cannot say what it is,—analogous to memory in our minds, and which, viewed through the medium of human nature, is memory. For when He would have His people plead with Him for those blessings, which He is always more ready to give, than they to ask, He says: “Put me in remembrance: let us plead together.”—And we read that He appointed the rainbow as an outward visible sign, that He might thereby remind Himself of His covenant with the earth; “And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” And in the passage which stands at the head of this Chapter, as well as in other passages of the Levitical Law, God is expressly said to be memorialized, and precepts are given for the purpose of making the memorial come up before Him. Thus the silver trumpets are to be blown over the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, “that they may be to you for a memorial before your God;” and in time of foreign invasion an alarm is directed to be blown with them, the effect of which should be this, “And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies.” Similar language is maintained in the New Testament.

The prayers and alms of Cornelius, we are told, represented him in the sanctuary of Heaven ; “ thy prayers and thine alms are come up *for a memorial* before God ;” “ thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.” And indeed the great prayer-precepts of our Lord and His Apostles are all founded on the idea that God must be made acquainted with our wants, before He will supply them. “ Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” “ By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” In exact conformity with all this, the great precept for the highest act of Christian worship runs : “ This do in remembrance ”—for the commemoration—“ of me,”—a commemoration, not primarily or principally before man, but rather before God, that He may be moved by this pleading of Christ’s Atonement to forgive, accept, and bless you.

II. But, secondly, what is done in the Eucharist as regards Christ’s Burnt-Offering and Meat-Offering,—the self-devotion to the glory of God and the interests of man, which characterised His life upon earth ? This offering, like the preceding, cannot be repeated ; it can only be pleaded. And it *is* pleaded, when in the Prayer of Consecration we make mention of Christ’s “ one oblation of himself once offered,” as being “ a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” For had not His self-dedication been thorough, hearty, entire—had not the devotion of His life come up to the extreme of God’s requirements,—His oblation of Himself could not have been “ full, perfect, and sufficient,” the victim offered for the sins of men would not have been without blemish and without spot, and so could not have endured the strict scrutiny of God’s judgment.

But though the perfect devotion of Christ’s life, whereby He offered both the Burnt-Offering and Meat-Offering, cannot possibly be made a second time, and nothing remains either for Him or for us but only to

plead the merits of it, yet in respect of this devotion, it is open to us to do, what we cannot do in respect of the Sin-Offering,—that is, to imitate it in our humble measure—to devote our lives, as far as the honest intention and purpose of them is concerned, to the same great ends of God’s glory and man’s welfare. And this devotion will be most acceptable to God, *not independently or on its own ground* (for it must always be flawed by the corruption of our nature), but on the ground of Christ’s meritorious oblation of Himself, if it be made from loving gratitude for the mercies of redemption, that gratitude, which only the Holy Spirit, the living thread of connexion between Christ’s Spirit and ours, can enable us to yield. Most beautifully is the imperfection of this offering in itself, and the supply of its imperfections in Christ, set forth in one of Dr. Daniel Brevint’s Eucharistic<sup>3</sup> Prayers; “O my God, accept of a heart that sheds now before thee its tears, as a poor victim doth its blood, and that raises up unto thee all its desires, its thoughts, its zeal, as a burnt-offering doth its flames. And since my sacrifice can neither be holy nor accepted being alone, accept of it, O Father, as it is an oblation supported by that sacrifice which alone is able to please thee. Receive it, clothed with the righteousness of thy Son, and made acceptable with that holy perfume which rises from off his altar; and grant that he who sanctifies and they who are by him sanctified, may be joined in one passion, and may enjoy hereafter with thee the same glory. Amen.” This is the sacrifice to which St. Paul exhorts us in the beginning of his twelfth chapter to the Romans; “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,” (those mercies which must be embraced by faith in the first instance, before God will accept from us any sacrifice,) “that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” And the words in which our own Communion

<sup>3</sup> The prayer is given at length in the late Bishop Wilberforce’s “Eucharistica,” one of the most valuable manuals of Eucharistic preparation which our Church possesses.



Service instructs us to present this offering, are drawn from the above passage of the Epistle to the Romans, with only a slight enlargement of its phraseology,—“And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee.” Here then, there *is* a sacrifice in the Eucharist, though it is not a sacrifice of Christ, nor of the Body and Blood of Christ. And yet it *is* a sacrifice; for both St. Paul and the Book of Common Prayer call it so; even a sacrifice of burnt-offering under the New Law of the Gospel. Under the Old Law burnt-offerings consisted of cattle without blemish, wholly consumed upon the altar. The New Law has substituted for these the living bodies of Christians, yielded in all their members, by an act of self-dedication, to the glory of God and the service of men. Such an offering can only be yielded by a heart inflamed, as Christ’s was perfectly, and as ours through the working of His Spirit may be imperfectly, with the love of God and man.

But there is another sacrifice *in* the Eucharist, distinct from that *of* the Eucharist, which this is the place to notice. If a man sincerely gives himself to God, he gives with himself his property; what he has follows what he is. Our Lord detected the fact that the rich young man had not given himself up to God, in the self-surrender of perfect love, by applying to him the test of a demand, which God was then and there making upon him; but with which he was backward to comply. “One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.” We see from the example of Cornelius that alms no less than prayers may come up to very good purpose before God; “thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.” And alms are distinctly recognised in the New Testament as a sacrifice under the Gospel. St. Paul called the things sent to him through Epaphroditus from the Philippians, “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.” And in the Epistle to the Hebrews

the sacrificial character of alms (assuming them of course to be offered in the faith and love of Christ's Name) is expressly recognised; "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

And it will be remembered that in the earlier part of the English Communion Office there is a distinct recognition of this particular sacrifice. "The Alms for the Poor, and other devotions of the people," are at a certain point of the Service to be received "in a decent bason to be provided for that purpose;" and then humbly presented by the Priest and placed upon the holy Table; after which, so much Bread and Wine having been also placed there as the Priest shall think sufficient, he is directed to use these words; "We humbly beseech thee most mercifully to accept our alms and oblations, and to receive these our prayers, which we offer unto thy Divine Majesty."

Here, then, there is a second sacrifice made *in* the Eucharist, distinct from the sacrifice *of* the Eucharist, the sacrifice of our substance, which necessarily accompanies the sacrifice of ourselves. We may call it, if we will, the sacrifice of the meat-offering under the New Law. For the meat-offering foreshadowed Christ's devotion to the interests of men, as the burnt-offering foreshadowed His devotion to the cause of God. And alms are for the relief of our fellow-creatures.

III. But, thirdly, what is done in the Eucharist as regards Christ's Peace-Offering for thanksgiving and for the fulfilment of His vows? Here at length we come to the Eucharistic Sacrifice proper, as distinct from the sacrifice of our souls and bodies, of our prayers and alms, which are made in the course of the Eucharistic Service. It has been already said that our great High Priest in heaven, He who, in the strict and highest sense of the word, is our *only* priest, deals with His Thank-Offering in a different manner from that in which He treats His Sin-Offering and His Burnt-Offering. His life cannot be—needs not to be—lived over again. His death cannot be—needs not to be—died again. Neither Sin-Offering nor Burnt-Offering does He, nor can He, re-

peat; He only pleads them efficaciously before the throne of grace. But His Thank-Offering, in the nature of things, is capable of being repeated. And He does repeat it continually. Nor does He repeat it singly and alone. What Christ does in Heaven, His Church does upon earth; nay rather, it is not as if He were in one place far remote, and His people in another; He does it not only for them, but with them and among them, standing in their midst. For though "the natural body of our Saviour Christ is in heaven, and not here," yet, in virtue of His promise, He is in the midst of the two or three who are gathered together in His Name, and is with His true disciples "always, even unto the end of the world." He "walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," which are His churches; His ascension having exempted Him, if I may so speak, from the condition of a local presence, to which He was subjected upon earth, and having given Him that ubiquity as Son of Man, which He always had as Son of God; and His Spirit being that living thread of connexion between Himself and His people, which draws Him down, with His retinue of angels, into the midst of their assemblies. In these assemblies He is Precentor as well as Priest, leading and conducting, though unseen by the bodily eye, their sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. This He vowed before His Incarnation that He would do; "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." And this He does at every Communion Feast, as well as at the assemblies of His people for lower and less blessed exercises of devotion, in pursuance of that vow.

But what is there, then, distinctive in the Communion Feast, which differences it from, and gives it a higher rank than, other assemblies of the Church,—makes it, not only *a*, but *the*—the distinctively Christian sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the sacrifice which bears on it Christ's own stamp and signature? It is that provision is made in it for bringing the worshipper into direct and close communion with the object of His worship. In order to join

worthily in the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (or, at least, as worthily as it is given to flesh and blood to do), the worshipper must be united to Christ the sacrificing Priest. This is effected in the old way, the way which was recognised in the Church under the Law, and which is still recognised in the Church under the Gospel. The eating of a sacrifice was held to bring the eater into communion with the being to whom the sacrifice was offered. As the Apostle intimates, when speaking of the Lord's Supper, recognising its correspondence under the Gospel with the Levitical sacrifices of the Old Dispensation, and unfolding to us the communion with Christ, which is enjoyed by a faithful participation of it. "Behold Israel after the flesh : are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? . . . . the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God : and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils : ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."

In accordance, then, with this view of the effect of eating a sacrifice, it was decreed that men should still have communion with God by the eating and drinking of the consecrated symbols of His Son's Passion and Sacrifice. There was still to be in the Church a material offering, the "Peace-Offering for thanksgiving" of the New Law, which should be consumed by the worshipper, and which being received in penitence and faith, should bring him into immediate communion with the one great Priest, the one great Leader of the Church's worship. Great modifications of the outward form of the offering were to be made, corresponding to the change of the Dispensation. Bloody Sacrifices were abolished ; and an oblation of bread and wine, the strengthening, restoring, exhilarating food of man, and in some respects more instructive in its symbolism than animal sacrifices could be, was substituted in their stead. And the consumption of part of the sacrifice by the fire of the altar, connected as it was with the idea

that the god himself, to whom the sacrifice was offered, *literally* partook of it,—this was abolished. The Peace-Offering of the New Law, unlike that of the Levitical ritual, was to be wholly consumed by the worshipper.

The above observations will, I think, have made it appear that the whole Eucharistic act, including the oblation of the elements, their subsequent consecration, and (last, but not least) the reception of them, is in itself a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the “Peace-Offering for thanksgiving” of the Old Law, preserved in its essentials under the new, but brought out in a new form, and with great modifications, corresponding to the change of the œconomy.

If now in conclusion we are asked categorically, whether the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist, considered in themselves, be a sacrifice, there is no reason to blink the answer. The *unconsecrated* Bread and Wine are, and were recognised by the earliest Fathers and Liturgies as being, an oblation, or offering of the fruits of the earth, made out of our substance, to God, in acknowledgment that we are nourished and preserved by His bounty. But they are not an offering of the Body and Blood of Christ, nor indeed (since, at the time of offering them, they have not yet received consecration) have they yet become even the authorized symbols of His Body and Blood. It is a most instructive circumstance that in all the earliest Liturgies which have been preserved to us, the oblation or offering of the elements is made (just as in our own Liturgy)<sup>4</sup> BEFORE AND INDEPENDENTLY OF THE CON-

<sup>4</sup> I am indebted for this observation, as also for the passage of the Clementine Liturgy (“admitted to be the best representative we have of an Ante-Nicene Liturgy”) quoted further on, to the Rev. John Le Mesurier’s most valuable treatise on “the Scriptural and Primitivè Doctrine of the ‘Eucharistic Sacrifice,’” written for “Anglo-Catholic Principles Vindicated,” Part XII. (1871 to 1874, Oxford and London, Parker & Co.), a serial which contains many words in due season, and is likely to do good service. Dr. Biber’s papers in the same Part are also of great interest and importance.

SECRATION. And immediately *after* the oblation, and the prayer that God would accept it, follow words to this effect ; “ Send down thy Holy Spirit, the witness of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, on this sacrifice, that he may exhibit (*ἀποφύνη*) this bread, the Body of thy Christ, and this cup, the Blood of thy Christ ; that all who shall partake of it may be confirmed in godliness, may receive remission of their sins . . . . and may obtain everlasting life.” This petition clearly shows two things ; first, that in those early days the Bread and Cup *were* regarded as a sacrifice ; secondly, that they were *not* regarded as a sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ. For *after the sacrifice has been offered*, the Holy Ghost is invoked over it, to make it to the faithful receiver, what therefore it was not before. It is much to be regretted that the compilers of the American Liturgy have departed from this primitive order, by placing the oblation of the elements *AFTER* the consecration of them, thereby hazarding a great and fatal mistake, which is *that what is offered to God is the very Body and Blood of Christ*. As matters stand, the English Communion Office is probably the most faithful representative in existence of the earliest Liturgies. As for the *consecrated* elements, they are the authorized symbols of Christ’s Body and Blood, with which the memorial of His sacrifice is made before God ; as it is written, “ This do in commemoration of me.” And they are also the vehicles and means of conveying that Body and Blood to the penitent and faithful soul, as it is written ; “ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ? ”

And now to sum up the scope of this Appendix, in bringing it to a close. The author has endeavoured to warn the reader against what he cannot but regard as being very serious practical errors, which have recently grown up among us in connexion with the precious and blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, and also to

exhibit a full and clear outline of the doctrine of that Sacrament, as taught in holy Scripture, and echoed by the writings of the earliest Fathers and by our own Communion Office. He will only add the prayer that, in this very critical and difficult subject of controversy, God may open our eyes to see the right path between the frightful distortions and corruptions of Romanism on the one hand, the effect of which is to degrade (we were about to say, to exalt, but it *is* degradation, not exaltation) the Supper of the Lord into an object of idolatrous worship, and the half-truth taught by Zwingle on the other, which recognises the Supper as a means of stirring in the human mind the affecting remembrance of the death of Christ, but finds nothing more or higher in it. Do not say of this latter doctrine, by way of apology, "It is at all events true, so far as it goes." So it is, we readily admit. But half-truths, accepted without their legitimate complement, are sometimes the most mischievous of errors. "Work out your own salvation," expresses one side of truth. But what shall become of our salvation, if we set ourselves to this working out without due consideration of the other side; "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"?

## ADDENDUM

JUST before the appearance of this new Edition, the Rev. H. T. Armfield, of Salisbury Theological College, is good enough to furnish me with the words of the English Canon (against celebrating before Matins), to which reference is made in the Appendix, p. 303, note 11. They run thus ;

“ Nullus insuper sacerdos parochialis præsumat Missam celebrare, antequam Matutinale persolverit officium, et Primam et Tertiam de die.”

Mr. Armfield adds, that by the Sarum rubric the celebrant could only know what collects he was to use at the Mass from having said his Matins. The rubric he refers to is thus given in a foot-note to his valuable work on “the Gradual Psalms” (p. 371) :

“ Notandum quod in omnibus Dominicis et in festis cum regimine chori per totum annum, hoc generaliter observatur, *ut ad missam tot dicantur Collectæ quot dicebantur ad Matutinas*, nisi in die Nativitatis Domini.”



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